



Class PZ.3

Book B2168

Copyright N^o Ke
COPY 2

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

KEEBAN

By Edwin Balmer

RESURRECTION ROCK

THE BREATH OF SCANDAL

KEEBAN

In collaboration with

William MacHarg

THE BLIND MAN'S EYES

THE INDIAN DRUM

KEEBAN

BY
EDWIN BALMER



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1923

copy 2

PZ 3
B 2168
Ke
copy 2

Copyright, 1923,
BY EDWIN BALMER.

All rights reserved
Published April, 1923

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

APR 26 '23

© C1A704326

R

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	MY BROTHER FINDS HIMSELF IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE	I
II	AND ESCAPES FROM BOTH	14
III	I HAVE ENCOUNTER BY THE RIVER	31
IV	I SIT IN ON FATE	48
V	THE UNDERWORLD INTRUDES	60
VI	AND I FAIL TO PREVENT A BUMP-OFF	72
VII	I KEEP MY OWN COUNSEL	87
VIII	A LADY DISCREDITS ME	98
IX	I SEEK THE UNDERWORLD	107
X	AND LEARN THE WAYS OF ITS LOGIC	116
XI	THE THIEVES' BALL	134
XII	I DISCOVER "THE QUEER"	153
XIII	AND LEARN THE SOOTHING EFFECTS OF FOND DU LAC TWINS	173
XIV	I TAKE GOVERNMENT ORDERS	185
XV	IN WHICH I ASSIST A GET-AWAY	196
XVI	I WALK INTO A PARLOR	210
XVII	CHIEFLY DEVOTED TO A GAS CALLED KX	219
XVIII	DORIS APPEARS AND VANISHES	239

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX I HEAR OF THE GLASS ROOM	248
XX DORIS AND I ARE TAKEN TO IT	256
XXI DORIS ENTERS THE GLASS ROOM	267
XXII A CROAKING AND FINIS	287

KEEBAN

KEEBAN

I

MY BROTHER FINDS HIMSELF IN TWO PLACES AT
ONCE.

THE quick, quiet unlocking and then the closing of the hall door on the floor below told me that Jerry had come in; so I sat up, roused as I always was when I felt him about. He put life into any place, — even into an Astor Street marble mansion in the somnolence of two-thirty on a morning after everybody else has gone to bed.

Since my light was on, although it was only a shaded reading lamp and although the double blinds before my window must have prevented more than the merest glint outside, I was sure Jerry had noticed from the street that I was awake; for he notices everything; and everything bears to him a meaning which he has the clear head and the nervous energy to make out. I never realized, till I began analyzing Jerry, how much more you need than a brain for thinking; to get anywhere, you must have a sort of habitual energy to tackle incidents and carry

them in your mind beyond the first, simple registry of the observed fact.

Take that evening we came home late together, when my cousin Janet with her new husband was stopping with us. They'd arrived only that day, and Jerry hadn't seen Janet since she married and he had never met Lew Hollings at all or heard anything about him except that they were married and were to visit us. It was a very hot night and they'd gone to their rooms early to rest from the train. We'd given them our best guest rooms, — the pair of bedrooms on the third floor in front with a dressing room in between. I noticed, as we approached the house, that the dressing room light was burning and the bedrooms both were dark with the windows open. Somebody'd forgotten the light; that's all it meant to me. Jerry looked up at the house.

"Why, that's too bad, Steve!" he said. "That " was so plain to him that it didn't occur to him that he needed to explain when he finished. "I thought Janet and Hollings were getting along all right."

"They are," I said. "They're perfectly happy. What gave you the sudden idea they're not? "

"Oh, closed doors on a night when it's eighty-

eight and no breeze, Steve. Neither has a door open, even to the dressing room; they don't know the light's on. They've each shut themselves in one room without opening a door even for a current of air to-night."

"You're crazy, Jerry," I said. "I had dinner with them. There's nothing the matter." That was what my people thought too until Janet and Lew separated, openly, a couple of weeks later.

Jerry came into my room and, as soon as I saw him, I flung my book to the foot of the bed; for it was perfectly plain, even to my sort of wits, that something mighty amazing to him had happened. He was pale and his blue eyes looked positively big; he has fine eyes, Jerry; you like them, though they take hold of you and seem to look through you; the reason you like them, in spite of this, is that while finding out something of you, they grant you a good deal of him. So they told me now that Jerry was afraid; and, though we have been companions for twenty-eight years — that is, since we were babies — and though that companionship includes service in the Argonne, I had never seen him so afraid before.

He'd come upstairs with his overcoat on, over

his evening clothes, for he'd been at Ina Sparling's wedding, and he hadn't even dropped his hat downstairs.

"How long you been home, Steve?" he asked, coming beside me.

"Since half-past twelve," I said.

"Awake all the time?"

"Yes, Jerry."

"Anybody call for me?"

"No."

"You've not heard the 'phone at all?"

"No. What's the matter, old fellow?"

"Dot!" said Jerry, staring down at me without now seeing me at all.

"Dorothy Crewe?" I asked, in the way I have of asking perfectly obvious questions.

"Yes, Steve."

"Oh; you've quarrelled?" I said, imagining I saw a light. "That's it."

"I'd trade a good many quarrels for what happened — probably, Steve."

"To her?" I said again, stupidly.

He did not exactly nod his head but he inclined it a trifle lower. "The damndest thing, Steve; the queerest affair!" he said, looking quickly at me again. He brushed my book to the floor and dropped on the foot of the bed and

sat there, staring straight ahead without speaking for a minute while he listened for sounds in the street or below; but there was nothing.

He swung about and demanded of me suddenly, "You noticed Dot to-night?"

"Of course, old fellow. Besides, she was with you most of the time."

He jerked, wincing at that; and Jerry's not jerky. He's excitable and capable, I've always felt, even of violence. But he possesses not one bad nerve; he might hit in anger but he would hit perfectly steadily if he hit to kill.

"Yes, of course she was with me. I was responsible for her to-night. Did you notice what she was wearing, Steve?"

"Blue dress, wasn't it — pale blue? She certainly was stunning, Jerry."

"Her necklace, Steve; didn't you see it? Those damned diamonds and sapphires her father brought back from abroad with him!"

"Of course I saw them. So — she lost them to-night, did she? Or they were stolen? That's it?" But I realized by this time it was far more than that.

"Steve, let's go over it just as it happened," Jerry entreated. "When did you leave the Sparlings'?"

"Twelve o'clock. Ten minutes after," I added more precisely and he did not question me further on that; he knows I always keep track of time.

"You saw Dot about midnight?"

"Within a quarter of an hour of the time I left, Jerry."

"When did you see me last?"

He tried not to — I thought — but he could not help bending toward me a little and he could not keep his voice from going a little up and down.

"Why, at the door when I went, Jerry!" I said, my own voice cracking a little, excited from him.

"At the door of the Sparlings at ten minutes after twelve, Steve?" he begged of me.

"Why, yes, Jerry."

"I, Steve? You saw me there?"

"Why not? What is it, Jerry? I've told you I did."

"You know me; or you ought to know me, if any one in the world does. And you wouldn't joke about it with me, would you, Steve? If all the rest of them were doing it, if they'd sworn you in, too, in the hoax, you'd tell me the truth now, wouldn't you? For you see Dot's taken!

If she's not really taken, I believe she is; that's the same to me! Oh, I know you wouldn't be in on anything like that against me!"

"Dot taken? Where? How? What is it that's happened?"

"That's what no one knows, Steve. Oh — we've got to go over it just as it came on. Up to half-past eleven, you know everything. That is, there's nothing in particular to tell. We were all at the Sparlings' dancing about after the wedding; about half-past eleven people began drifting over to the Drake to Casoway's dance. Dot and I meant to go; with Jim and Laura Townsend in their car. In the coat room I was held up a few minutes finding my things; this was still at the Sparlings', Steve. When I came down to the carriage door, I couldn't find Dot. The Townsends were gone; somebody said she'd gone with them, so I followed on in the next machine for the Drake. Don't know whose it was; just some people said, 'Going to the Drake? Get in.' So I got in and soon as I got to the Drake went on a hunt for Dot but couldn't find her right away. Awful jam there, Steve; couldn't find the Townsends for twenty minutes; then they said they hadn't brought Dot. Thought maybe the Westmans might

have; they came over at the same time. So I chased up Sally Westman; she hadn't brought Dot; but I ran on Tom Downs just coming in; this was twelve o'clock then, Steve.

" 'Hello, Jerry,' he said to me. 'How the devil'd you beat me over here? '

" 'When'd you leave the Sparlings'? ' I said.

" 'Just now; oh, three minutes ago.'

" 'Was Dorothy Crewe over there?' I said.

" 'When I left?' Tom said. 'Why, certainly; she was with you. You said you were coming over; but not right away. But you seem to have passed me.'

" 'I've been here half an hour,' I said, and he laughed and went on. Thought I was joking and I thought he simply remembered seeing me with Dot before I came over and he got mixed on his time. I wasn't sure even that Dot had stayed at the Sparlings', so I asked some more people who had just come over; and they'd just left her at the Sparlings' with *me*, Steve! "

I didn't try to say anything now; he was trying to tell me as quickly as he could.

"They were positive about it and wondered how I got over so quick. Steve, I tell you it sent a shiver through me right then. I decided to go back to the Sparlings' to get her; so I

'phoned and Gibson, Sparling's man, you know, answered. I know his voice. I said:

" 'Is Miss Crewe still there, Gibson? '

" 'Yes, sir,' he said. 'Just in the next room.'

" 'Let me speak with her,' I said.

" 'Yes, sir,' said Gibson. 'Who shall I say? '

" 'Fanneal,' I said.

" 'Mr. Stephen Fanneal?' said Gibson.

" I thought everybody was going crazy; how could Gibson mix up your voice and mine, Steve? 'Jerry Fanneal,' I told him, only to have him come back with a 'What, sir?' So I told him again; and he gave me, 'But Mr. Jeremy Fanneal is here, sir.'

" That got a 'what' out of me, Steve. 'Right there now?' I got after Gibson.

" 'Yes, sir.'

" 'You can see him, Gibson? '

" 'Yes, sir; just this minute he passed in the hall with Miss Crewe.'

" 'Get him to the 'phone then, right away,' I said.

" 'What name shall I give him, sir?' said Gibson.

" 'Never mind the name. Tell him he's wanted on the 'phone.' And then, by God, Steve, he talked to me! "

I was leaning toward Jerry now. "Who?"

"Myself, Steve! Don't look at me as if I'm a loon. I tell you that fellow who came to the 'phone gave me a jump higher than yours. He didn't talk exactly like me; I mean, didn't say words I'd have said — quite; but he said 'em the way I speak, Steve. After I'd heard him, 'Who in the devil are you?' I said.

"'Jerry Fanneal,' he said, cool. 'Who's this?'

"Of course that left me without a comeback! 'You're with Dorothy Crewe?' I said. 'Let me talk to her!'

"'All right,' he said; and like a fool I waited three minutes for somebody to come. Of course nobody did; and I couldn't rouse anybody else; he'd left the receiver off. But in four minutes I came to and grabbed a cab and got over to the Sparlings' to find I'd just gone half a minute before with Dorothy. I'd taken her alone in a cab for the Drake; they wanted to know what was the matter; why I'd come back? Where was Dorothy? I didn't wait to explain; I cut back to the Drake; but she didn't come; and I didn't come! I mean the other fellow that was me never showed up anywhere. Nobody

saw more of us than me after that. There I was, all right; where was Dorothy?

“By God, Steve; it’s near three now; and she never came; she’s not gone home or anywhere else where she would go. If it wasn’t for those damned diamonds and sapphires they hung on her to-night, I might believe there’s a chance for a joke somewhere. But she’s a couple of hundred thousand on her neck to-night; or anyway, she had, Steve. And the papers were telling all about it; ‘Harrison Crewe brings to Chicago royal jewels’ and all that stuff; you saw it, Steve. — I’ve been to the Crewes’; just came from them. They don’t think anything’s happened; nothing’s ever happened in their family, you know. Things only happen to other people — things like what may be happening to Dorothy, Steve! Of course I couldn’t make myself awfully clear; all they feel what has happened is that Dorothy, probably for good reasons of her own, dropped me and went off from the Sparlings’ with somebody else and I’m overexcited about it. They don’t think it’s time yet to call in the police. You know them; I worried them but not to the point of having in the police and the newspapers on an affair of their own. But I called headquarters on my way out of their

building, from the porter's room under their apartment. Told police to call me here; so you'll take any call for me, won't you? I'm going out on the street again and I'll 'phone you for report within every fifteen minutes. Have it now, Steve? "

"Yes," I said, to try to help him. It wasn't true, yet truer, perhaps than "no"; for I did have the essential fact which was that he tremendously feared that harm had come to Dorothy Crewe through an extraordinary event which he, himself, could not yet make out.

"Get dressed then, Steve; and stay here for me."

I stood up; he stared me over again and started for the door but caught at my telephone on the stand in the corner. It is an extension of one of the instruments downstairs and the bell is below; but it can be plainly heard in my room, especially at night. It had not even jingled, I'm sure. So Jerry's grab at the receiver was solely from his impatience; and when he had it up, no one was on the line; he had to give central the order: "Police; central detective bureau." When he had them, "This is Jeremy Fanneal, of ——" he gave our telephone number and house number on Astor

Street. "I called you a while ago asking you to call me immediately if you —— *What?*" Then I was trying to get to him; but he heard it first. "Steve! They have her! They found her in the street in her blue dress and her light hair! Dot, Steve! Her necklace is gone but there's marks. — Oh, Steve, they're waiting for me to come and identify her."

I took hold of him. "She's dead?"

"They think so; or as good as dead."

I held to him. "You wait for me," I said, "or I'll not let you go. You'll save time in the end. Your word, Jerry."

He looked at me straight. "You'll jump, Steve," was all he said.

II

AND ESCAPES FROM BOTH.

I GOT into my clothes in a minute; Jerry hadn't been able to remain in the house, but I found him walking up and down beside the cab which he had kept.

"Chicago Avenue police station," he said to the driver, and he was in ahead of me. "They took her there," he told me, "from where they found her — on West Division Street near the river."

He had no doubt whatever that she was Dorothy Crewe — his Dot whom he had loved; and, for what had come to her, he was holding himself guilty.

"Steve, she thought she was going with me!" he cried out. "It was my Keeban! There is a Keeban, you see; my Keeban took her away and killed her!"

I jerked in spite of myself. You, of course, cannot understand why without this word of explanation. Jerry and I, as most of our ac-

quaintances know — and the Chicago papers, in their occasional discussions of the Fanneals, always veiledly refer to the fact — are not blood brothers. It is a perfectly evident fact to any one who has seen both of us; for I am the Fanneal type, — tall and with big bones, strong and spare in flesh but slow moving; my features are Rhode Island Yankee transplanted to Illinois, regular enough but too angular; too much nose, a bit too much chin, also. My hair is sandy brown; my eyes blue. Jerry's eyes are blue but mine have no quality of the living color of his; when I set the word down, it suggests that our eyes, at least, are alike, whereas we are nowhere more different. Mine are merchants' eyes, come down from ten recorded generations of cautious traders; Jerry's are — who knows? Jerry's long, graceful body is not so strong but twice as quick as mine; Jerry's clear, dark skin and his soft, black hair on his daredevil head; his small-boned but strong hands; the laugh and the lilt of him and his *élan* are — French, perhaps? Or Spanish, or Italian? All three together or none, but some other marvellous blend of energetic, passionate people? No one can say, least of all, Jerry himself. For one day, when I was about two years old and my nurse

had me playing carefully by myself in a selected and remote spot in Lincoln Park, Jerry appeared under the trees and ran across the grass to play with me. Of course my nurse immediately jumped to protect me from contamination from a dark stranger, though it is remembered that he was clean and nicely clothed; she tried to send him away and, when he wouldn't go but eluded her and hugged me — and I hugged him — she parted us and tried to take him back to his mother. But she couldn't find his mother or any one else who claimed him; she couldn't find even a policeman. (Obviously I had no memory of my own about this but was told it long afterwards.) Then my mother was driven by that way and found Jerry and me together.

It seemed that mother considered my nurse to blame for Jerry becoming detached from his own party; my mother always fixed blame for occurrences; also, she always felt responsibility. She felt that now for Jerry and took him in her carriage and brought him home where she kept him isolated in a guest room while she had the police notified and advertisements put in the papers. She said she would persist in efforts to return Jerry to his parents until she got results; the authorities — she thought — were too care-

less about such matters and too soon gave up, and merely sent a child to an institution. Accordingly, Jerry remained at our house; and then, when my mother's efforts brought no result, she still kept him. A child's specialist examined him and found him reassuringly sound, with excellent development, no ascertainable defects or hereditary taints, all senses acute, and decidedly "bright." Apparently, he was about two years old; "of European parentage" was as far as the doctor would commit himself.

"French," my mother decided. "He says his name is 'Jerry.' I don't think that it is his name; it probably represents 'mon cheri.'"

"Spanish," my father always said, for no reason, I believe, other than he thought my mother was too positive and also he particularly liked the Spanish. They couldn't help liking Jerry, who knew, besides his name, only the usual hundred or so ordinary words which a child picks up first; English words, they were, at first spoken with a marked French accent, my mother said.

So they let Jerry and me play together; I was an only child. A companion, therefore, was "good for me"; and we have been together

ever since. I cannot remember a time when there was not Jerry; he cannot consciously recall any home previous to ours or any one previous to us, — besides the nameless “mama” and “papa” whom he asked for, at first, and “Keeban.”

Keeban, apparently, was another child; a brother or sister; or perhaps only a playmate. Jerry could not describe him, of course; he could only go about looking for and asking for Keeban. Naturally, as time went on, my mother and father replaced Jerry's own nameless mama and papa; but I never replaced Keeban; and Jerry never forgot him. As we became older, Jerry's idea of Keeban became at the same time more imaginary and more definite; for Keeban changed from some one for whom Jerry searched to some one always with us, — an imaginary companion, a third to us two, interesting, always up to something and most convenient to accuse when we were caught in heinous wrong.

I can remember, when we were about seven, asking Jerry what Keeban was like. I did not consider that Keeban represented a real person; he was, to me, merely one of Jerry's interesting imaginations.

“ Keeban,” said Jerry, “ is another me. Don’t you never have a Keeban, too? ”

“ No,” I said; but I had Jerry’s — that other imaginary boy, the duplicate of Jerry, who came to see us, whom we played with, who did extraordinary things and went away. Then, gradually, we dropped him; that is, Jerry ceased to mention him and we stopped having him “ come.” I think I forgot him until we were in Princeton University together; a lot of us had been to New York over the week-end and after we’d been back a few days, Jim Townsend dropped into Jerry’s and my room, when Jerry was out, and said:

“ Steve, I wouldn’t say a word against Jerry to anybody but you; but you ought to know how queer he is sometimes.”

“ When? ” I said.

“ Last Saturday in New York; I was down on the east side with a bunch of our class, just knocking about the ordinary way, when we ran on Jerry in a rum lot, I tell you. He pretended not to recognize any of us; in fact, he was in a bunch that tried to rough us; we had rather a go. When it was over, I got at Jerry, he made me so damn mad going in with that lot of muckers against us. I told him what I thought and

he looked at me as cool as could be. 'Who do you think I am?' he asked me, as though I didn't know him in Bowery 'suitings'; for he had on the whole get-up of his friends, Steve. I gave him up, I tell you; and he wasn't drunk, either. Since he didn't know me, I decided I wouldn't know him, next time I saw him here; so I passed him outside just now without speaking. He came after me and asked why. I told him; and what do you suppose he did? Denied he'd even been on the east side Saturday; he said I hadn't seen him; that wasn't he."

"It wasn't, Jim," I said. "Jerry was with me all Saturday on Broadway. We never got east of Fifth Avenue at all."

"That's right, Steve. Stand up for him; I would, too," Jim said; and nothing I could say would shake him that he'd seen Jerry. He was so sure about it, and so were the rest of the bunch who'd been with him, that it got me wondering, particularly when I remembered later that Jerry hadn't stayed with me all Saturday; we were separated for a couple of hours.

I said nothing to him about it; and it soon blew over until, a couple of months later, another bunch of fellows from the college ran into Jerry on the same side of town, but peacefully,

this time; so peacefully, in fact, that he borrowed a hundred dollars from them. Said he would be in trouble down there unless he had the money. I heard about this from several men and then from Jerry.

“Tell me straight, Steve; do you believe I do queer things?” he asked me suddenly one night.

“Of course not,” I said.

“I know you wouldn’t think it when I’m myself; but do you think there’s a chance that sometimes I’m not myself and I go queer — like that fight with Jim Townsend a few weeks ago; and borrowing a hundred dollars from Davis in New York last Saturday. I swear to you, Steve, I haven’t the slightest remembrance of even seeing Fred or any of the fellows with him who saw me and saw him hand me the hundred.”

“They must have gone queer themselves,” I said.

“No,” said Jerry. “What they say is true. I don’t remember seeing them; but I feel it.”

“Feel what?” I said.

“That they did meet me; for there’s another me about, Steve; you know I’ve felt that. I know now he must be one of two things — either another personality living in me which turns Jerry Fanneal off, sometimes, and turns on —

Keeban, Steve, like the dual personality cases in the psychology books; or he must be a real, physical duplicate of me — Keeban; that's possible, too, of course. But the way 'I feel him usually is another way; and the one way he can't possibly be; he seems to be me going on and growing up and living my life, as it would have been, if I'd never come to you, Steve. So, that way, sometimes he seems more me than myself; for I seem to be somebody else and he, when I think of him that way, seems to be me.'

We couldn't get any further than that; Jerry and I went to New York the next day and poked about the district where Davis claimed to have met Jerry, but we couldn't find trace of anybody like him. Jerry paid the hundred to Davis, I remember; he considered himself in some way responsible and soon the incident passed off as the fight had; Jerry lived it down and nothing like it occurred again for years, until this night when Jerry, at the Drake, talked to himself at the Sparlings and he went back to the Sparlings to learn that he had just that moment gone out with Dorothy Crewe.

If what Jerry had just told me was exactly true, there was — of course — no explanation of it but one; there existed, physically, another

Jerry. I could not say to myself that Jerry had not told me the truth as he knew it; but I could not help wondering how much of it he knew. Was he actually at the Drake at the same time "he" also was at the Sparlings'; could he have talked to "himself"; and done the other things he related? Or was there, living outside of him most of the time, Keeban — the man he would have become had he never come to us — who occasionally, at long intervals, could take command of Jerry's body? That idea had never seized me until to-night as I sat beside him in the cab which was hurrying us to the police station where Dorothy Crewe lay; for now I no longer doubted, either, that she was Dot.

Ahead on the dark and still street showed lighted windows and a police ambulance stood end to the curb; we saw it was empty and so we went at once into the station.

In a little, dingy room a girl lay on the stretcher by which she had been carried; an ambulance doctor and two police detectives bent over her. The police turned to us when we entered.

Jerry stepped ahead of me but over his shoulder I saw Dorothy Crewe. She lay almost as if she were asleep in her pale blue dress in which

she had danced that night; her hair was beautiful as ever — corn-color hair, little disarranged; her face and neck and arms were white and run with red where cuts and scratches showed. There were signs of street soil on her dress but none on her body; some one had washed them away.

“She’s not dead!” Jerry cried; then, in a whisper, “How is she?”

Said the ambulance surgeon, “We don’t know.”

“But she’s not dead!”

“No; not yet, anyway.”

Jerry’s face hovered over hers as he searched hers; then, very softly, he kissed her. “You’ll not die!” he whispered to her; then, to the surgeon, “Don’t let her die, doctor,” he said.

“What’s happened here?” I asked the officers.

It seemed that she’d been found in the street by a patrolman walking his beat; he thought she was dead so he sent her to the station. Now, having found life in her, the doctor was for taking her to a hospital; but he honestly thought it no use at all.

“What do you know?” the police came back at us.

"She's Dorothy Crewe," Jerry told them, and added her father's name and number of his home. "To-night I took her to a dance at the Sparlings'. She had a necklace — here."

Gently he touched her throat where were marks made by him who had snatched at her necklace and torn it away.

"Diamonds and sapphires," Jerry went on and seemed to forget what he said.

A police captain named Mullaney kept at me. "When did she leave Mr. Sparling's?"

"About half-past twelve," I said. "She was going from there to a dance at the Drake hotel given by Mr. Casoway. She never arrived there."

"Go on," said the captain.

Jerry went on. "She left the Sparlings' wearing, besides what she has on, a blue silk cloak and a necklace of diamonds and sapphires on a platinum chain, which her father brought her from Paris."

"Perhaps you've read about it," I put in. "They were supposed to be worth a quarter million."

"I suppose," said Jerry, "they were gone when you found her."

"She had on her a quarter million in stones!"

the captain repeated. "Well, that makes it some plainer, sir. They was off her when we found her. Now go right on, Mr. Fanneal. She left Mr. Sparling's big house on the Drive to go to the Drake hotel at half-past twelve, you say? She didn't go off, at that hour, alone?"

Jerry swung quickly and looked at me. "I'll tell 'em, Steve!"

"Go ahead," I said. God knows, I didn't want to. I had no idea how to tell it; my thoughts, on the subject of Keeban, were absolutely a blob, just then.

"She did not leave alone, Captain," Jerry told. "There is some confusion over who she went with. That was why, when she did not come to the Drake or return home, we became alarmed and I telephoned to you. Some people thought she went away with me; but she did not."

"Go on," said Mullaney again.

"You'll find a good many that say she went with me, Captain; Gibson, the doorman, and probably Mrs. Sparling and some of the guests. But it wasn't me, Captain."

Mullaney squinted his eyes as he looked at Jerry and then he looked at me.

"Where was you, Mr. Steve Fanneal?" he challenged.

"I'd gone home, then."

"Then where was you?" he swung back to Jerry.

"I'd gone to the Drake."

"Leavin' your partner at Mr. Sparling's? I thought you said you took her there."

"I did."

"Then why didn't you take her away?"

"I'll tell him, Jerry," I said; for I felt the sudden strength of his suspicion. At first, he had spoken alike to Jerry and to me; but now he treated me and my word in one way and Jerry and his word in another. I was the known, actual son of Austin Fanneal; Jerry, as everybody knew, was the waif of any blood from anywhere.

"You can't, Steve," Jerry warned.

But there, like the fool I was, I started to tell.

Two big men in uniform came in and each took an arm of Jerry.

The doctor was doing things during most of this time; now and then I noticed a hypodermic needle.

Dorothy Crewe breathed and her eyelids fluttered; she opened her eyes.

Only the grimy ceiling was in her sight; she

stared at this and then saw a blue coat, and some realization and remembrance began to reach her; and she jerked and shivered violently.

Jerry started to her, pulling the two big men with him. The motion made her turn her eyes and she saw Jerry; and she screamed!

It sent me shaking; it dropped Jerry down, hiding his face. She was convulsing in a spasm of hysteria. "He! He! He! He!——" She seemed to try to cry "He did it" but she could only scream "he, he," until it went into a crazy laugh.

The doctor tried to calm her; the big men dragged Jerry away. He was making no resistance, God knows; he was limp. Could a man go against a thing more awful than he'd just met? Here was the girl he loved; she'd trusted herself to him and she believed that, for the diamonds about her neck, he'd attacked her!

She told something more in that scream of a laugh; she told a little, at least, of how she had struggled before she'd been strangled and knocked senseless and thrown into the street. And she had thought Jerry did it!

I stepped along beside him. "Keeban," he whispered desperately to me. "You see there's Keeban."

It meant nothing at all to the police. To me? What did I know?

"Go back to her, Steve," Jerry begged. "But, old fellow!" he held me.

"What?"

"You'll believe there's Keeban? Think, Steve! If you don't, you'll believe I did that!"

"No! I know you couldn't."

"And you'll keep on knowing? You'll always know?"

"Jerry!" I cried.

"Your word, Steve?"

"Of course."

"Go back, now, to her."

I left him to be dragged, limp, down the corridor between the big, uniformed men.

In the grimy room, Dorothy Crewe had lost consciousness again; she was quiet; there was nothing I could do for her.

A pair of shots sounded; a couple more, almost together; and yells.

I knew the trouble before they shouted it to us; Jerry had got away. Instantly, without a jerk of warning, he had sprung from their hands as they dragged him, all limp the second before; he was out of a door and gone; and their loud bullets bagged them nothing.

They were all about the streets and alleys searching for him when I came out to the ambulance beside the stretcher on which was Dorothy Crewe.

“I’ll not go with you to the hospital,” I told the surgeon. “I’ll go to her people; don’t ’phone them.” And so, while the police looked for Jerry, I went to Dorothy’s people and tried to tell them — Keeban.

Keeban? Of course they did not believe. Stunned themselves, they thought me mildly maddened by what had happened. Keeban! What did I truthfully know of him? I got back home at last and stopped at Jerry’s room, which had always been next to mine; I opened the door and in the dark looked in. “Keeban!” I said to myself. “By God, there’s a Keeban; there has to be!”

And, careful not to wake my own people, I went into my room.

III

I HAVE ENCOUNTER BY THE RIVER.

AS long as I stayed by myself, I had some luck at believing; but there was morning and the newspapers and telephone calls. I had to tell my father then, and mother; and they talked with the police. They talked with Mrs. Sparling and Gibson and fifty others who were at the dance. And also they talked with Dorothy.

She was conscious now but in complete collapse, and her prostration, added to what she said, gave the final proof against Jerry. She'd loved him, too, it seemed; and he'd attacked and robbed her.

There's no sense in stringing here the sensations the papers spread; they were perfectly plain and obvious. "Foster Son of Millionaire Attacks and Robs Society Girl"; and "Foundling of Fanneals Turns Brute"; and "Waif Reared to Riches Reverts to Original Savagery" and all that tosh. They dogged my people and me, the servants and even our office force. They

ran articles by " professors," cheap alienists, psychoanalysts and the rest of the ruck running after sensation.

Jerry had " reverted "; that was the seed of their stuff. He carried in his blood a " complex " which suddenly caused him to cast off all the restraints and habits of thought and conduct which our family had drilled into him and to plan and effect the robbery of the jewels about Dorothy Crewe's neck. The dance and drink that night had inflamed him, they said; then something flared up inside him and he forgot all that we had grafted into him, forgot even his own obvious advantage in remaining the son of Austin Fanneal, for the " primordial, overpowering instinct for violence."

I found nothing to put against all this. I talked to the people whom Jerry had told me he'd seen at the Drake at the time when Gibson and the rest said he was at the Sparlings'. Townsend and Sally Westman and Downs admitted they'd seen Jerry at the Drake but they all believed they'd become confused in guessing at the time. It was earlier that he was over there, they thought; then he must have gone back to the Sparlings' and taken Dorothy away. I got no help from them.

How could I tell them of Keeban? My own mother was sorry for me when I told her. She took the strong line she always does; she considered herself to blame for having taken in Jerry, twenty-eight years ago, and with no knowledge of his blood, rearing a child with unknown capacities for crime and putting him into a position to harm others.

Dorothy's people that day proclaimed a reward of ten thousand dollars for the taking of Jerry Fanneal, dead or alive; and my father, on that same day, put up ten more. He sent pictures of Jerry to all the papers and himself supplied the minute descriptions telegraphed to St. Louis, Cleveland, Denver, Philadelphia, New York, everywhere.

They set the whole world after Jerry while I — I, in those days, went down to business and tried to do it, there in my office with my name on the door, next to the door which had borne Jerry's name.

But now his name was gone. They dissolved it with acid, so that no one could see that the gold leaf on the glass had ever formed his initial; and they burned every sheet of paper with his name on it. So there by day, beside his

empty office, I tried to do business and, when the day was over, I walked by the river.

The Chicago River, as many may know, cuts the city like a great, wide Y with long, narrow, irregular arms, one reaching northwest and the other southwest from the top of the short, straight shank which is the east-and-west channel from Lake Michigan. Not to the lake, remember, for the Chicago River flows in the opposite direction from the natural current, since men have turned it around to carry water from the lake up the shank of the Y and then up the southwest branch to the drainage canal and to the Illinois and the Mississippi rivers. It is a useful, but not the most fervent Chicagoan can call it a pleasing stream, even in its valuable reaches on the main channel east and west, and where the south branch turns past the most precious property of the city.

Here and there are modern warehouses with a hundred yards or so of decent, new dock between the bridges which cross the channel every block or so, but most of the buildings forming the river bank show straight up-and-down walls of narrow, tall, none-too-clean windows and cheap brick, badly painted. At the bottom of the wall, there may be only a pile strip to sup-

port the structure, but more frequently the buttress before the slow flow of the water is a couple of yards wide, offering a loading platform for ships which may tie up alongside or for the flat steam scows of the Merchants Lighterage Company which ply up and down the river.

Our building backs on the river, not far from its bend to the south and frequently, at the end of the day's work, Jerry and I would go out by the river way and along on the strip of platform beside the water. Instantly it took us from the world of streets and dust and carts and trucks and taxicabs, from the traffic pound and clatter; there a five-thousand-ton steamer, deep-laden, slips up beside one so silently that you hardly hear the plash of the bow wave washing before it and the lap of the eddies on the timber under your feet; you hear the sudden, clear voices of seamen; bells sounding from engine-room depths; now the whole air rumbles with a tremendous, unlandlike blast as the vessel blows for the opening of the bridge, under which scurries a black tug, lake bound, dipping her banded funnel for clearance. Watermen scull an open boat across the oily current on river business of their own. Before you and above reach the

bridges bearing the streets; but they seem now concerned with affairs of another world.

No one else ever took that walk with Jerry and me; we had idled along the river hours on end together, following the black band of the narrow timber causeway above the water to which, here and there, elusive, unidentified doors would open. Somewhere along there, if anywhere, Jerry was likely to look for me, I thought, if he wanted me alone and unwitnessed. So, after Jerry was gone, I kept up by myself the habit we had formed together; and on the seventh night I came this way — it was Monday evening and the ninth day after Jerry disappeared — one of those doors to the water suddenly opened beside me.

The hour, which was half-past five, was more afternoon than evening, but the darkness was almost of night; for the month had turned to November, and between the brick walls of the canyon where the black river flowed there was less light from the sky than from the few windows where yellow bulbs glowed. It was so cool as to feel frosty as I walked against the fresh breeze blowing in from the lake.

“Steve!” said a girl’s voice, hailing me.

I turned, and, in the light which came through

the doorway, I found a trim young person gazing at me. As the illumination which came from a single, unshaded electric bulb set on a blank wall opposite the door was behind her, I could see at first only that she wore a dark, tailored suit and a small, dark hat over hair which was unbobbed, abundant and light in color — almost as light as Dorothy Crewe's had been.

"Steve, do you want to talk with Jerry?" she asked me calmly. "Come in, then."

She stepped back, and I stepped after her. As soon as I was in, she closed the door; and there was Jerry standing in the corner back of the door.

"Hello, Steve," he greeted me without emotion.

"Hello, Jerry," I said, and tried to show as little, but I was feeling more than ever before in my life. For here we were, Jerry and I, who'd spent all our lives together; here we were alone with that girl, who'd evidently come with him. I looked at her again and made sure I didn't know her.

"This is Christina, Steve," Jerry told me in that same, dull voice, purposely deadened to keep out emotion. "Christina," he said to her, "this is Steve."

“Who’s Christina, Jerry?” I said; stupid thing to ask. He knew it was stupid and he smiled, as Jerry always did; he was used to my being stupid. He simply nodded toward her to say, “You see; there she is.”

I stared from her and looked about the room, which was a square, bare place with white-washed walls, corresponding to an ordinary cellar room.

Considered from the street side of the building, a hundred feet or so away, it was a cellar, though its riverside door was eight or ten feet above the water. A single window, with a drawn blind, was beside that door; in the opposite wall, beside the light, was another door, leading either to a basement cavern which could have no outside light, or to a stair; I could not know, for the door was closed and bolted.

The floor was cracked cement, strewn with straw and wisps of excelsior; old, open boxes and barrels stood about and a broken desk and chairs. Evidently the place had once been used as a shipping room but had been deserted. I tried to locate it in connection with some particular building, but failed, for I had not kept track how far I’d walked.

Suddenly Jerry told me, as though he’d seen

my thought, "We're back of Linthrop's old warehouse, Steve."

Then I knew that the building above us was empty; and I knew, as I gazed at Jerry, that he'd chosen this place to stop me because of his uncertainty of me.

And here I stood before Jerry shaking with my uncertainty of him! He saw it. An impulse swept over me to seize him and drag him through that door to an arrest; for the instant, I stood before Jerry, not as his brother who believed in him — I who had given my word to believe in him — but as a representative of society which hunted him for his treacherous, savage attack upon Dorothy Crewe. For the instant, I saw him as others thought, — my brother with a beast inside him which had struck, through him, at Dorothy Crewe.

Then the sight of his face heaped upon me too many other memories of Jerry and me through twenty-eight years. He was not quite as he had been; how could he be? He was hunted for crime; for nine days he had known that all his world — all the world which we had made his — believed he had committed that attack on Dorothy Crewe. And she had believed!

So it showed in his eyes; it lined his lip stiffer

and more defiantly; it cast something harder into his whole countenance. Of course his clothes made him different, too, for he had on a heavy, badly cut suit of cheap wool such as roustabouts and deckhands wear; he had a Mackinaw coat and cap on the chair behind him.

"I've got to get out, Steve," he said to me.
"That's why I stopped you."

"You've been here all the time?"

He nodded. "In Chicago," he said.

The girl had been keeping away from us, but she stepped up beside him; and I saw again the corn color of her hair, which was like Dorothy Crewe's. She had blue eyes, too; otherwise, she was not like Dorothy. She was pert and bold, this girl — a sort to get what she went after. What was she to Jerry? I wondered. Where had he found her? What was her business here to-night with him?

"He's got to have coin, Steve, don't you see?" she said to me.

"Why?"

"Why?" She laughed at me. "Ain't nobody after him? Oh, perhaps you ain't heard? You don't read the papers; maybe you don't read. Can't Steve read, Jerry?"

Jerry made no reply but to shake his head a little at her; then he watched me.

“D’you suppose,” Christina continued to me, “it’s worth nothing to nobody — whoever sees him or gives him a hand or a cot or a meal — to do a squeal? Is everybody in this city so elegantly fixed that nobody could possibly find any use for twenty thousand smackers?”

“Keep still, Christina,” Jerry said.

“How much do you need?” I asked him.

“How much can you drag with you?” the girl kept at me. “When you got to buy yourself past bulls and beefers, who can drag down twenty thou by simply settin’ the squeal, how far do you suppose a dime’ll go toward squarin’ ’em?”

“Cut it, Christina,” Jerry said this time. “Steve doesn’t know how to be mean.”

“Don’t this time,” she shot at me. “Have it with you along here at ten to-morrow night. If the old man can stick up ten thou to get him, can’t you find something like it to help him away?” And she switched out the light.

I replied but stood in the dark and heard the door to the warehouse unbolted; I heard their steps within, echoing away. Outside, on the platform beside the river, somebody approached

but did not stop. The warehouse went quiet and there was nobody by the river, so I stepped out.

Here I was, where I had gone in, and I tried to think how I'd changed from ten minutes before. I'd talked to Jerry; or hadn't I?

It was strange that never once, when he was before me and I was speaking to him, I doubted he was Jerry; yet I'd sworn to him, on that night they arrested him, that I'd believe Keeban existed also; I'd believe Keeban robbed Dorothy Crewe and threw her into the street. Consequently, I ought to believe that the man with Christina might be Keeban. But I didn't; I didn't believe in Keeban at all just now; and yet a few minutes ago, I did.

I went home and said nothing to my people; I said nothing about this to any one at all. I stayed by myself that evening and, about eleven o'clock, I walked down by the edge of the lake beyond that strip of park which turns in front of the homes on the Drive and near which we live.

"Steve!" a voice whispered to me; and I jumped about.

Jerry had come up beside me at the edge of the lake. This time he was alone.

He was not in deckhand's garb and Mackinaw

coat; he wore a plain, dark jacket and felt hat. I could not plainly see his face; the light from the lamps on the Drive gave me only glints on his cheekbone and nose and chin and in his eyes turned to mine, but enough to make me know Jerry.

Then I remembered I'd known the man in the warehouse basement for Jerry when he was speaking to me.

"Hello," I said.

"Steve, he called on you to-day!"

"Who?"

"Keeban!"

I stopped and thought a minute; and I was shaking. "Oh," I asked him, "where was that?"

"You know," he came back. "I don't; but didn't he see you?"

"Yes," I said; and went right on. "What was over our old beds when we slept together in the north room?"

"You didn't ask him that?" this fellow said.

"No; but I'm asking you."

"Oh, a picture of the *Constitution* fighting the *Guerrière*, Steve, you old fool!"

"Anything peculiar about it?"

"I'd cracked the glass across the lower right

corner, shooting my air rifle in the room, disobeying mother. She never would have it mended."

"What was opposite?"

"The charge up San Juan hill. Anything else?"

"No; that's enough. You're — Jerry. How do you know about that other meeting?"

"I don't; that's why I'm asking you. But I've been waiting for it and I got the hunch he'd reached you to-day."

"Keeban?"

"He goes by the name of Vine just now; Harry Vine. There was somebody with him?"

"A girl," I admitted.

"Light haired?"

"As light," I said slowly and deliberately, "as Dorothy Crewe's."

He had to draw breath deep after that. "Steve, how is Dot?"

"Don't you see the papers?"

"Of course."

"Well, they've told the truth about her condition."

Again he drew deep breath; then he struck his hands together. "I'll cure her, Steve, by the only way. I'll show her Keeban! But

we've got to be careful — awfully, awfully careful, don't you see? I've got to catch him, not scare him away. Suppose he goes off forever; suppose he's drowned, body lost; suppose he's burnt; suppose a dozen wrong things, Steve, and I can never show him. Then I've got to be Keeban forever; nobody but you will ever believe! Will they? ”

“ Nobody,” I agreed.

“ Come, then; to-morrow's our chance. No word to the ‘ bulls ’ or he'll hear it and not show up. We have to handle this ourselves and close. Who was with him? Christina? ”

“ That's what he called her.”

“ She talked for him? ”

“ Come to think of it, Jerry, she did, mostly.”

“ That's why he had her; my voice gives him most trouble. Sometimes he gets it perfectly; then he goes off into things I'd never say. He knows it but doesn't know what to say. He's so near perfect for me that he fooled you, you see; no wonder he fooled Dot.”

“ No.”

“ What did he ask of you? ”

“ Money.”

“ How much? ”

“ He left that to me but suggested — Christina did — ten thousand dollars.”

“ Um,” said Jerry and set to thinking.

I did some myself. “ What did he want with ten thousand dollars if he has Dorothy’s diamonds? ” I demanded.

Jerry gazed at me and smiled; I could see the glisten of his teeth. “ Don’t you and the pater keep going down to business, Steve? Pater could buy ten strings like Dot’s, if he’d a mind to, of course; but I never saw him refuse a chance to pick up a few thousand more. What’re you going to do, Steve? ”

“ That’s what I was down here for, thinking it out.”

“ Get the money, Steve. Draw it yourself from the bank. He’ll have you watched so he’ll know whether you have. Then have it; and tell nobody else but go to meet him.”

“ Alone? ”

“ I’ll be there. Now, don’t you see? ”

“ Yes,” I said.

“ Then you’ll do it? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Great! Your hand on it, Steve! ”

I gave it and he grabbed me. “ Now I’ve got to go. Hamlet’s father’s ghost has nothing

whatever on me! For a certain term, I can walk the night; then, 'fare thee well!' One minute; suppose you meet my friend before I do, don't forget; don't bother him with the battles of the War of 1812 or San Juan Hill or test him on Hamlet. Just try to interest him, till I arrive."

He stepped from me. "Don't follow," he asked, and I let him go; and once more, when he was gone, I wondered what I knew. Two of them there were, he said; but I had not yet seen two.

Why could not both be Jerry — clever, quick-seeing Jerry? Suppose he had known, after he'd met me in the room beside the river, that I was bound to doubt and waver; and so he'd come with this scheme, this clever scheme, to lead me on and make me give my word. Anyway, here I was with my word given and my hand on it.

IV

I SIT IN ON FATE.

I GOT the money next day; I took it myself from the bank. Also I got my revolver and spent the evening in the city. About half an hour before ten, I went to our offices and roused the watchman to let me in. I pretended to work for a while and then let myself out the river door and started down the black, narrow walk above the water.

No one was anywhere about at that hour; not a window in the walls on either side was alight. Ships slid in and out; one minute deckhands, sailors and mates on watch would glide by within ten feet of me; the next I was alone with black, locked doors on one side, the water on the other.

I heard my name whispered in Jerry's voice. "You've got it?" the voice said; and some one was beside me.

This was Jerry of the Mackinaw coat, of the basement room and of the companionship of

Christina. If he were Keeban, I must hold him; I must not question nor show doubt. If he were Jerry, I had nothing to do.

"Here I am, Jerry," I said.

"Give it to me."

I kept him walking beside me until the faint light, which trickled down over the bridge at the end of the block, showed me his face, Jerry's face; but, for all of that, also Keeban's.

"Satisfied now?" he asked me, laughing. "Come, Steve!" And he put his hand on my wrist. I drew back, thinking that, if he were Keeban, he'd murder me for ten thousand dollars if, for her necklace, he attacked Dorothy Crewe. I had my hand on my revolver, yet he had the advantage of me, for he could strike without warning and I must wait to see what he meant to do.

Down the river, a steamer blew for bridges; and, "Come now!" he said again to me.

Then some one else was there; some one else of his sort and burly in a Mackinaw coat; and my wrist was my own; no one had hold of me.

They were grappled together and together went down.

"Stay out of this, Steve!" Jerry's voice said to me; and some one choked; some one gasped

for breath. I bent over them and in that trickle of light from the bridge, I saw a face — one face, Jerry's. I could not see the other. Then they turned; the one on top was on the bottom but they were over again before I could see. There was Jerry's face once more.

“Stay out, Steve!”

They were throttling each other as they rolled; they came to the edge of the water and I pulled them back, hauling on one and dragging the two.

A light was coming; soon I would see; for the boat, which had been blowing for the bridges, was slipping up. I looked about to it; and something happened; a splash below me. One of the two was gone; the other, gasping, stood on the edge of the timbers, staring down and moving along this way and that while he watched.

I had my gun out now and shoved it against him.

“Steve, you old fool,” he cried. “He broke my hold; he's in the water! Watch; where is he?”

“You tell me this,” I came back at him. “What was the book we kept first in the case at

the edge of your bed? What were you always reading? Damn you, tell me quick!"

He laughed, sucking for breath. "'Westward Ho,' Steve, you old fool!"

"And the next one? You hardly knew which was better."

"'Kidnapped!'"

"Jerry!"

"Here's the boat!" Jerry cried. "Damn him, he'll get away!" For the big hull, with her lights, her sprays of steam, her splash of screws, was beside us. "He's swum under water to the other side; he's come up there. He's got away," Jerry finished.

Of course we waited till the ship was past and waited and searched long after but found no one for our trouble.

"Where's the money?" Jerry asked me then. "You didn't give it to him?"

"He's the one that met me first?" I said.

"Yes; of course. Did you give it to him?"

"No; I didn't have it. I'm not the complete fool, Jerry. I got it from the bank and left it in our office."

"Let's go there."

We entered our building by the river door and went up the back way to my office. Jerry knew

those stairs; he knew where to turn in the dark; he found the light switch by feel and without fumbling. There was not the slightest doubt, when the light came on, that I was with my brother Jerry. My trouble was simply had I been with any one else?

Of course I had seen some one else in a Mackinaw coat who had fought with Jerry; but all I saw was his size and his coat; I never saw, together, two faces which were Jerry's. I could not help thinking this as we sat down; I could not help wondering if all that business down there beside the river was a set stage play of Jerry's to fool me.

He opened the drawer where I kept cigarettes and took one and lighted it. "How're sales?" he asked me.

"Oh, fair."

"Tell me, did Smetsheen, in Minneapolis, pay his account?"

"In full, yesterday. You keep on thinking about the office, Jerry?"

"To tell the truth, not once till just now."

"Where have you been keeping yourself?"

He smiled. "Moving mostly." He walked to the door of the room which had been his office and looked in. "Who's there now?"

"Nobody."

"Not waiting for me? "

"I am," I said.

He shut the door, running his finger over the space where they'd dissolved the gold letters of his name. "They're right," he commented. "I'll never be back — to stay; that is unless I'm caught before I catch Keeban. He had a good idea for me on that money, Steve; I can use it. Got it here? "

I nodded.

"Want to give it to me? "

"There's a squeal set against you which you've got to square? " I asked.

"Who told you that? "

"Christina."

"Haven't you got us mixed now? " He looked at me.

"Maybe," I said, boldly.

He got up. "Keep your damn money. By God, you, Steve —— "

I got up and pushed him down into his chair. "I don't deserve that. You know it."

He laughed. "You sure don't. Old Top, I had a hundred on me that night at the station; it's spent. Problem; how to live? Bigger problem; how to entertain? I might blow a

peter, work a second story, stick up a store, scratch some paper; but non-felonious endeavor, old Bean, is absolutely closed to me. I'll come to some of the big-time stuff; I'll have to, if I keep my place; but I can't help a certain prejudice in favor of postponing it as long as possible. Meantime, I've simply got to entertain. I'm supposed to have rocks worth a quarter million, you see."

"You mean, in the underworld, of course you're Keeban."

He laughed. "Underworld's good, Steve. Marvellous how the human race laps up that 'up' and 'down' rot. We simply have to have it, heaven and hell, above and below. Who believes in either as a place? Think it out a second, Steve; where, exactly, d'you suppose is the underworld?"

"Why," I said. "South State Street, partly; and part of the west side. Down in New York along the Bowery, in spots, and near the east end docks."

Jerry shook his head, still smiling.

"Where is it, then?" I retorted.

"Where's hell, Steve, these days?"

"Why," I said, "within one."

"That's it; there's where's the underworld,

too. Among those who carry the underworld within their breasts, I'm Keeban; and therefore needing, more or less immediately," his tone trailed off practically, "as much of ten thousand dollars as you've got in that peter behind you and which you feel inclined to give. It'll go to good use, Steve; great use! No sense trying to tell you now. Take Christina, for an example. You saw her last night."

"Of course."

"Recognize her?"

"No," I said, but I wondered; and at his hint, something stirred in my memory.

"Think red hair, not yellow."

I couldn't, to any use; yet now I was sure I had seen her. More than that, I'd known her, and I groped for her name and her right association, in my memory.

"Who is she, Jerry?"

He shook his head. "Not now."

"Where'd I meet her before?"

He smiled again. "In the underworld, one time you went there."

"You mean that time you and I went down South State Street to ——"

"There you go, thinking up a place again, whereas, old Top, the place was most proper;

polite, in fact, and almost in our highest circles. The only underworld about was the bit she packed with her; but it was quite a bit, believe me. And it's growing."

"That means," I guessed, "something's going to happen where she is?"

Jerry looked away and thought and looked again at me. "That's one place something's fairly sure to happen soon; of course, there are several others. It's funny, Steve, to see ourselves now."

"From where you are, you mean?"

"That's it. Take me, for instance, as I was. Down there, in the east end of New York, was my particular friend, Keeban. I knew nothing of him; he knew nothing of me, probably, till a bunch from Princeton ran onto him and took him for somebody they knew. They sure must have puzzled him, but they started something in his head which he half tried out by 'touching' another Princeton bunch for a hundred and getting it from Davis. About that time — as long as eight years ago — Keeban 'marked up' me."

"'Marked up?'" I repeated.

"Marked up my name on his board as good game for attention when he could get around to me. What made him put it off so long, I don't

know; probably he'd a lot of prospects chalked on his board ahead of me; probably he felt he'd wait until he could put in the time to make proper preparation to appear as me. He guessed he had a great chance for a big haul; and — he made it."

Jerry went pale and looked down. "There's many more marked up on Keeban's board and on others'. I know some of the names marked up and something about what's going to occur to them. It's a little like sitting in on fate, Steve," he said, color coming back to his face, "to see this man's number and that creeping up to the top of the board; to a limited extent, one knows what's behind to-morrow, what's going to happen. Here's a man you know and I know and, to all appearances, he's sitting secure; but on Harry Vine's board, we'll say, his number is up toward the top. He doesn't guess it and you can't nor anybody else in the city; but at a certain time, and at a certain place and exactly in one way, he's going to die; and that's all there is to it."

"Who're you talking about, Jerry?" I demanded.

He changed swiftly. "Nobody; just talk. What was I up here for, anyway?"

“ I left the money up here,” I reminded.
“ We came up to get it.”

“ Why don’t you, then? ”

I turned to the safe and spun the combination. When I touched the banknotes, I thought to compromise with myself, give him some but not all. Like Jerry, he guessed it.

“ All or none, Steve,” he said.

I gave him all.

“ That’ll be useful.”

“ Wait! ” I held him.

“ Want it back? ”

“ No. You’re sitting in on fate, you said,” I went at him. “ You know what crimes are going to be committed; then why don’t you stop them? ”

He laughed. “ After I’d stopped the first, wouldn’t I soon cease to know? Old Top, a man in my position has rather to pick and choose. He can stop one, perhaps; then let it be a good one! Besides, that’s not my business now; I’m getting Keeban. Yet, if certain names get to the top of the board, I’ll call you — perhaps. On your own wire. Now Hamlet’s father’s ghost again. G’night, Steve.” He left me.

Sometimes, when I thought it over, I believed

Jerry and Keeban, separate people, had met me that night; sometimes I was sure that Jerry had worked ten thousand dollars out of me. I would analyze his talk and realize how he led me along, shifting from direct discussion of the money to his hints about Christina and the numbers coming "up" and then, after making me interested in this, how he got the money from me.

But one thing was true and undeniable; I did know Christina. Many times during the following days I tried to place her, but never did until that call reached me about the next "number up."

V

THE UNDERWORLD INTRUDES.

IT came completely out of the blue. Ten minutes to twelve, noon, was the time; and no doings could have been more dull and drab than mine the minute before the buzzer under my desk rattled my "personal" call. This meant my private wire, which did not run through the office switchboard and which had no published number in the telephone book; so, when my buzzer jerked, Miss Severns always left the call to me and quietly rose and vanished from my room.

She always acted as though I owned some enormous, private intrigue into which her ear must not pry, whereas the truth was that line never carried any conversation more bizarre than my mother's voice reminding me to meet Aunt Charlotte on the Lake Shore Limited; or perhaps mother wanted to be sure I had my rubbers; or else Jim Townsend might be after me for a round of golf at Indian Hill. Conse-

quently I liked the compliment of Miss Sevens's silent disappearance; but I bet she knew the truth. Anyway, now she got out and so I was there alone.

I had nothing at all on my mind; I had been just finishing a letter to Red Wing about those five carloads of Minnesota potatoes which we had found somewhat nipped by frost and I'd begun the phrasing, in my head, of a crisp, businesslike note to Baraboo, Wisconsin, about a shipment of presumably dried lima beans which must have been caught in the rain somewhere. From which you may gather that Austin Fanneal and Company are wholesalers, packers, canners and jobbers of food; a sound profitable business and socially absolutely all right in Chicago, but still it's not the most enthralling pursuit here. I must admit it had its dull spots, even for me; but I was up to my eyes in it; for, as I've mentioned, I was the only child; father was over sixty; and I knew that some day I must carry on. So there I was cheerily concentrating on the most polite yet effective phrase for telling the Baraboo commission house that their beans had got wet; and the world was to me a wan expanse of farmers dragging bean vines, Wisconsin warehouses, city gro-

cery stores and delicatessens and flat buildings full of clamorous families shrieking for food. Then that buzz; Miss Severns on her feet and out of the office; the door shut and, as I spoke, I heard Jerry's voice:

"Steve!"

"Old fellow, hello! Where are you?"

That was a foolish question, I knew before I got it out. He disregarded it entirely.

"Put your mind on Winton Scofield, Steve. Don't let him ride home in his own car to-night; make him take a taxi."

"Why?" I cut in before taking time to think. Of course, Jerry could not tell me. It was perfectly plain from his voice that, wherever he was, he had only a few seconds in which to speak to me; and if anything was plainer, it was that his situation precluded explanations.

"Make him!" Jerry repeated quickly. "And don't let him know he's being made. Don't say a word of this to any one, whatever happens!"

And the wire at the other end went dead; but I continued to hold the receiver until central's voice briskly inquired, "Number, please?"

So I hung up and sat staring down on the pile of correspondence about potatoes and beans and canned cherries; but my world was no waste of

brown bean stalks and pickley delicatessen shops; nor was my world the usual dreary array of my own social sort, — those who have big homes on the Lake Shore Drive and on Astor Street and in Winnetka and Lake Forest; who have coveys of servants, of course, and put up a parade of cars and clubs and country places and everything else that looks impressive from outside but inside is duller than Deuteronomy.

They've pretty sets of silver and gold things about, naturally; and they've a good deal of platinum, too, with diamonds and rubies and sapphires and those green stones — oh, emeralds — stuck in. They've big bank accounts and a lot of other venal environment too tiresome to give you a thrill until you hear, all of a sudden, it has unduly tempted a gentleman from a stratum quite different but yet extremely adjacent to your own and the gentleman is likely to use some exceedingly direct, not to say personal, methods of getting your environment — and you.

For that was what Jerry's call meant. Win Scofield's name had crept to the top of somebody's board in the free society of the gentlemen — and their lady friends — of the "gat" and the "soup job," the "Hunk" and the

“bump off”; in that region, where Jerry had gone, Winfield Scofield’s number was “up”; he had been chalked for a “croaking.” And as I sat there staring and wondering why and how, suddenly I ceased to have difficulty in thinking red hair, instead of yellow, upon Christina, the riverside companion of Keeban. I “placed” her and knew her name and her association and where I had met her; for she was Winton Scofield’s wife. Of course she was; that was it! What an extension of the underworld into the polite world of my own!

Of course I realized that, as Jerry had said, I was thinking like a child; for the underworld’s not a compact, separate region; its territory is wherever its citizens set foot; and this may be at your office door? At the threshold of your servant’s hall? On the step of your town car? Who knows? For obviously it’s not a place at all but a contact, an association, a habit of conduct, an attitude toward life and, more than incidentally, toward death. Why should I be surprised that a citizeness had staked out a claim in the Scofield mansion?

I tried not to be. “Old Win Scofield!” I thought. He was sitting secure, if any one was, you’d say. But somewhere else Jerry was sitting

in on fate; he'd seen Win Scofield's number come up to the top of the rack at Keeban's club; and his 'phoning me meant that an unusual job was up. For Jerry had told me he would pick and choose and not try to stop a job, unless it was a good one.

"Say not a word to any one," he'd told me; I took that to mean not to say he'd warned me. It couldn't mean that I wasn't to get information. So I took up my 'phone and called Fred, who was my particular friend in the Scofield family.

Winton, the old man, was his father; of course Christina, of the alterable hair, wasn't Fred's mother; she was his father's fourth, or fifth wife.

There was rather a lot of unpaid publicity about him when he got her; and it turned on him, rather than on her, because he'd fallen for that rejuvenation operation and, of course, he tried to have it secret.

Naturally the newspapers learned and, as a result, Win Scofield fled the town as soon as the hospital let him out. As secretly as possible — that is, with only a few friends besides newspapermen and film news service photographers present — he'd married Shirley Fendon, a girl he'd met at a cabaret. Of course, being sixty-

seven or so and she twenty-two, he took her to Paris; but recently he'd slunk back to his home city.

Now it had never occurred to me until this moment that, in the general excitement over Winton's rejuvenation, nobody asked much about Shirley. The spotlight simply wasn't swung her way.

There she was where several wives — three or four, I couldn't remember — had been before her and where, if rejuvenation really meant a return to old Win's youth, several more would stand again.

The sons — they were Kenyon and Fred, about my own age and both by the original Mrs. Winton Scofield — astutely realized this and did a little deal in self-defense. They took over the grain business, when the old man was honeymooning, retiring father on an income, leaving him no vote or interest in the firm which a wife, past or present or future, could attach.

Perhaps this had something to do with his floating back to Chicago; perhaps his present wife worked that for purposes about to become plainer.

I arranged for Fred to lunch with me and, as

tactfully as possible, I brought up the subject of father.

When you've a pater who's been flattered with the spread of news print that had been lavished on Winton Scofield, he's a bit difficult to mention; but I managed to drift in a remark about him and I certainly detonated something. Fred had been storing too much inside of him concerning father and had required only the gentlest tap on the fuse to cause him to explode.

"Isn't he absolutely ludicrous!" Fred shot at me. "Age, damn it, Steve, age is no disgrace. It ought to be the noblest, most dignified stage of a man's development. What does Shakespeare say about age, 'His silver hairs will purchase good opinion!' And Byron ——"

I let him rave on as it seemed to relieve him; I knew he wasn't talking to me so much as he was rehearsing father.

"— he dyed his silver hairs twenty years back; and about the time the tango came in, he began pumping his face full of paraffin. Occasionally some of it slipped down in his cheek toward his chin. — Now I suppose you've heard of his rejuvenation operation."

I thought for a while and admitted that I had. "Wasn't it a success?" I ventured.

“A howling one — with father. He’s so young now he shouldn’t be married, legally, not having his parents’ consent. He ought to go back and start over at Andover Academy; in about four years, he’ll be ready for Yale once more. Young? We’re the old men, Ken and me, Steve! He’s sure he’s just fifteen; well, he surely acts it.”

After this, I felt I could inquire, without seeming too personal, “How’s he getting along with his new wife?”

Fred jumped. “Good God! He hasn’t married again since yesterday morning? I saw him then and ——”

“No,” I said. “I meant Shirley Fendon.”

“Oh, you call her new?” Fred comprehended my peculiar point of view. “He’s had her going on three months now.”

“There’s trouble between them?” I persisted.

“Of course,” said Fred, “being twenty-two, she’s a little old for him, but they do bunny-dip beautifully together.”

“Who was she?” I kept after Fred.

“Who? Shirley? Why, you just said her name; Shirley Fendon she was.”

“Wasn’t that just her cabaret name?” I inquired.

“Well,” said Fred cautiously, “why go back of that? We were willing not to.”

“You’ve met any of her friends?”

Fred shook his head. “That, at least, has been spared us.”

I steered the talk around so I could ask after a while, “Your father goes down to business now?”

“You bet not! We see to that.”

“Then what does he do?”

“When he manages to break away from Shirley? Well, in spite of his youth, he keeps up with some of his old friends; he likes his rubbers of bridge, you know; so every other evening or so you’ll find the young chap down at the club at his old place among the unrejuvenated.”

“To-night, for instance?”

“Friday; let’s see,” Fred considered. “Yes; he’ll be there to-night; why?”

Of course I didn’t tell him and I was more careful with my next remarks which finally drew out the information that, on the nights when he played bridge, Shirley, his wife — Christina, that was — herself drove down with the chauffeur to bring him home.

That made one thing clear to me, which was that the ride which Winton Scofield must not

take in his car to-night was the ride he would take with his wife. I wanted to tell it all to Fred; but Jerry had warned me not to.

I was feeling quite comfortable over Jerry that day; I figured he must be all right or he'd never have 'phoned me that warning. When I returned to my office, I merely went through the motions of business while I was waiting, really, for Jerry to call me again; but he did not. So I set to working up a simple, obvious sort of scheme that any one, in my place, might resort to. Likely enough, I thought, Jerry would be satisfied with such a scheme; he would expect about that much of me.

I'd found out from Fred that his father's bridge game broke up after eleven; so at ten that night, to make my plan sure, I took my roadster up through Lincoln Park and then up Sheridan Road to the big, new home of Win Scofield.

He's had a new one for each new wife, each farther north by a mile or so than the one just before; and as I went by them (the houses not the wives, unless they happened to be in them) I checked up my count; four before Shirley Fendon's.

She'd worked old Win for a wide, low, long

shack of stone with plenty of plate glass and colored decoration; stunning probably was the word for it. The expense was patent. I didn't know then that title to land and building was in Fred and Ken; they were simply letting Win live in the house on an allowance which certainly must have been liberal.

The house had one front on the lake and another on the boulevard; and at one end was a two-car garage. I parked my car below the house, went by on foot and, looking into the garage, saw both cars within.

It was easy to see, under the half-raised shades and between the curtains of the house, that the mistress of the mansion was at home.

VI

AND I FAIL TO PREVENT A BUMP-OFF.

SHIRLEY was at her piano near a window facing the boulevard walk. As the night was cool and therefore the window was down, I could not hear what she played but her fingers moved over the keys and her red lips parted and closed and her red head tossed with animation as she sang her song.

She sang to no one; at least, no one but she was visible from the walk. Surely it was a light, happy song which she sang as she tossed her head and smiled. Her hair was bobbed and it flung like fine spun bronze about her pretty ears. I thought that if I could paint, I'd take a try at her just now with the soft pink light of her piano lamp upon her. I'd paint her as Youth — Youth and something else. Youth Enchained!

No; that wouldn't do. There should be something submissive, or at least something pathetic about a young person enchained; and there was nothing submissive about Shirley

Fendon Scofield; and not the slightest touch of pathos. Not at this moment, at least. Quite the contrary.

I am not a fanciful or figurative man; I can watch symbolic dancing from Pavlova and Ukrainsky up and down and, unless I hold my programme in a good light, the performance never brings to me any pervading sense of "Dawn" or "Death," of "The Swan" or "Wild Pansies." But that dance of Shirley Scofield's gave me a thrill.

It was a dance, almost, as she tossed and flung herself to the lilt of the song I could not hear. Perhaps you say I took my thrill from the programme which Jerry had furnished to me. Let it go at that; anyway, I got it. Youth was set on snapping her chains to-night; and it was not to be nice snapping. Not at all! Youth was wild, orgiastic, reckless and bent on being free.

I thought her over while I stood out there after her dance was done and she had disappeared. Beyond any doubt, she was Christina. For her appearance to me in that room beside the river, she'd assumed yellow hair and a different dress and changed several other things; yet I was sure of her. I wondered what was her place in the plot afoot to-night.

I was looking in on a last act, I knew; the first had started long ago when Win Scofield met her in some cabaret and she decided to marry him. She might have been Keeban's woman then, I thought; and he, hearing her plan, had told her to go ahead. Or perhaps he had made the plan for her, marking up Win Scofield on his board then; and to-night old Win's number had come to the top.

I went down the street to my car and started the engine and kept it going to be ready while I watched. Ten minutes past eleven, I saw a light in Win Scofield's garage; a black car came out and a girl got into it. I waited until it was in the street and then, stepping on my gas, I charged up the road and gave that black car all I had.

It went into the curb and smashed a wheel and bent the axle too. I wrecked my front, naturally. Shirley Scofield's driver was out yelling at me; he turned and opened the door of his car and switched on the light and I saw Christina sitting in a corner. Youth snapping her chains wasn't there. A scared girl was, you'd think; but she wasn't scared. Not she! She was merely pretending to be frightened, while she sat there mighty quiet and trying to size me up.

She was wondering whether I recognized her from that room by the river, I thought; she must have been wondering several other things. For one, how did I happen to run into her just at this moment? For another, how much did I know?

One thing about me, I'm slow but I'm not expressive. I may be gradual about getting a fact from somebody else but not many learn much from me. In bridge, when I bid my hand, nobody's sure whether I have the cards or whether I'm just trying to force the other fellow up. To-night I stepped up to the car as though I'd no idea who might be in it.

"I hope you're not hurt?" I started; and then, "Why, isn't it Mrs. Scofield?"

She spoke my name; I said the obvious regrets and all that. She made the ordinary replies.

"I was going down after Mr. Scofield," she mentioned and she spoke to the chauffeur who had come about beside me. "Thurston, if you'll get out the other car now."

For a moment that stumped me; for if she was going to use another car, I had to use another plan and I hadn't another. My own machine, as I've commented, was in no shape to

respond to an encore on the act I'd just finished. At this crisis, Thurston saved me.

"You're all shook up, Mrs. Scofield," he told her; and then I was sure, as I'd suspected before, that he was in on her game. He knew that I hadn't just accidentally run him down; and he had different ideas about the advisability of trying their old plan with the other car.

He was a thin, Cassius-looking driver of about thirty and of the sort that smoke and dope, as well as think, too much. He was a smooth-shaven chap and would be good looking if the bones of his cheeks were less sharp.

"I'm all right, Thurston," she assured him; but I saw she was thinking things over and sparring for time.

"You'd better go back into the house and rest, Mrs. Scofield," Thurston suggested respectfully enough but strengthened the suggestion with a jerk of his head which he supposed I didn't see.

Cars were stopping all about us and people piling out and asking questions and offering help and so on. Shirley took Thurston's tip and let him and me assist her across the street into her house.

She thanked me beautifully and tried at once

to be rid of me; but I said I'd stay awhile to make sure she suffered no bad effect from my carelessness. So she gave up in a few minutes and telephoned her husband, at his club, that she wasn't coming down to-night and he'd better take a taxi home. I waited till I was sure he'd started in that taxi and then I left.

I'd done fairly well, I thought; I didn't fool myself into feeling that I'd seen old Win out of danger absolutely but I did feel sure that I'd pried his demise out of the present into the future. What's the phrase that surgeons use? I'd considerably prolonged his life, I thought; and, so thinking and fairly much pleased with my plan after all, I went to bed and to sleep.

It was half-past four, as I learned after I got fully awake, when I was roused by some one shaking me. It was father.

"Wake up, Stephen!" he was saying to me. "Wake up! The police are here. They want to talk to you. Jerry has just shot and killed Winton Scofield."

I stumbled up, as you may imagine, with father's words painting the picture in my mind. Jerry was in that picture. Then I shook myself and cast him out of the image and put Keeban, Harry Vine, in his place.

“ When was it, father? ” I asked.

“ Less than an hour ago. The police roused your mother who woke me.”

He was in pajamas and dressing gown, was father, with bedroom slippers on. He was tall and gray and gaunt-looking in the glow of my reading lamp which he'd lit. He shook a little and bent a little more; he believed that Jerry did it.

“ Where was it? ”

“ Jerry killed him at home.”

“ How? ”

“ He shot him, I said; he shot him down in cold blood.”

I began at this time to feel it; and what I felt was not that Jerry had shot Win Scofield; no, not Jerry who'd grown up beside me as my brother in this house. That duplicate of Jerry, whom I myself had mistaken for Jerry when I found him in that basement room, that man and his Christina, who then was with him, had “ got ” Win Scofield; and my rage rose against her. She was his wife and, if she had not fired the shot, she'd been in the plot. I thought how I had seen her last night singing and exultant. I clenched my hands and shook.

My father was going on. “ He was seen and

recognized by three persons. There's no doubt about it at all."

"Who saw him?" I said.

"Mrs. Scofield."

I laughed at that and it must have seemed mad to father. "Who else?" I asked him.

"The chauffeur."

I laughed again.

"And the butler," father finished.

I didn't laugh at that. I hadn't seen the butler but there was no reason for believing he was not in the game.

"They got him," I thought to myself. "They got old Win Scofield."

His life was not an invaluable one, as perhaps you have gathered; but that wasn't the point with me. They — his wife and other people close about him and upon whom he had a right to depend — had got him, and certainly in some low, treacherous way. No wonder Jerry had warned me to try and stop this; he'd told me he'd pick and choose, so when he took the risk of warning, he'd warn against a more than ordinary crime.

"Jerry killed Winton Scofield," my father repeated just then; and I came back at him now, "He didn't."

I couldn't tell him that Jerry had sent me to try to stop this murder. I remembered in time that Jerry forbade me a word. There was no use talking to father, anyway.

"Get some clothes on," was all he said to me.

"Keeban did that!" I proclaimed; and father pulled up and faced me.

"There's no Keeban; don't let me hear you say that again. This family faces the fact; Jerry's gone to crime. We face it and we do not shirk our responsibility. Come to yourself, Stephen. Jerry's picture is in police headquarters in every city east or west; New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Baltimore, every headquarters has reported the same; they have no criminal in their galleries who would be taken for Jerry. There's never been a Keeban in crime; it's Jerry."

"Keeban, he goes by the name of Harry Vine," I returned; "he's not in their galleries because he's kept out of their hands. They've got to catch a man before they can photograph him."

My father gave me up. "Come talk to the police," he said and stalked from my room.

Downstairs I met Mullaney and a plain clothes man from the central detective bureau

who wanted to know how I happened to run into Mrs. Scofield's car at eleven in the evening.

I wanted to know something before I answered this; I wanted to know that the witnesses, Shirley and Thurston and the butler, were being held by the police.

All three were; so there could be no harm in keeping what I knew. You can always tell what you've kept to yourself but never call back what you've chattered. I thought, "When Jerry warned me of this murder, he said 'not a word to any one.' If I say he warned me against Shirley, and the news gets out, not only the police'll be after him; the crowd he trains with now will go for him and get him, surely." So I said to Mullaney about my collision with Shirley's car, "You have the report on that accident."

"So you stick to it that 'twas an accident?"

I nodded.

"Then tell us, please, what was you doing up that way alone at that time so that you had the little accident?"

I didn't like his tone; I didn't like it at all.

There was no possibility of my convincing him of the existence of Keeban; and the impossibility of it only made me surer of Keeban,

just as it always did when I argued with father. You see at that time, it was a matter of faith with me; and nothing feeds up faith like antagonism. I was slow but also stubborn, as perhaps you've perceived. These men were here because they were sure Jerry had shot down Winton Scofield; Jerry'd been seen doing it. I wouldn't believe that; therefore I had to believe in Keeban.

"What are you getting at?" I asked Mulaney.

He changed his tone. "Our cards are face up on your table, Mr. Fanneal," he said, respectfully enough. "We're not accusin' you of any doin's; but we think you know more about him who was Jerry Fanneal than you are telling us."

"What do you think I know?"

"We figure that you thought he was up by Mr. Scofield's big house last night and that's why you was there; we think you was lookin' for him when you bumped into Mrs. Scofield comin' out."

I could deny that directly and I did. "That's wrong."

"You didn't know he was there or you didn't expect him there?"

"No: that's flat."

"Where may he be now? Do you know that? "

"I do not."

"That's flat too, sir? "

"Absolutely."

They gave me up after a while; and the reporters arrived, bringing details not mentioned to me by Mullaney or his companion. The reporters had to see all the Fanneal household and learn what we thought of Jerry now; they wanted fresh pictures, previously unpublished, of Jerry and of the rest of us; they had no doubt at all that Jerry had committed the murder.

"Why would he? " I asked them.

"Why? " was exactly what they wished most to know. They asked, "When Jerry was one of your family and before he 'reverted,' had he ever quarrelled with or taken a particular dislike to Winton Scofield? "

They were all full of that "reversion " idea which they played up in their papers.

I went to my office that morning, not with an intention of doing any business but to wait by my private wire on which yesterday Jerry had called me. Likely enough it was being watched

this morning, I thought; surely I was being watched as a natural consequence of the police knowledge that I was loyal to Jerry. Every few minutes, on the office wire, a newspaper or some friend or some crank was calling me; once mother called me on the private line; but otherwise it was silent.

By midforenoon the newspapers were strewing all over the streets the news that Jerry Fanneal, who had vanished since his attack upon Dorothy Crewe, had reappeared in the rôle of murderer and shot down old Winton Scofield, the recently rejuvenated. It gave them full flood tide for all their sensation stuff with the sun of the new murder and the moon of old scandals pulling the same way. Naturally they raked over the robbery of Dorothy Crewe and the fate of old Win with his former wives. You know those pages of pictures which every news sheet seems to have these days, — three-quarters photographs of the people who stopped their car on the railroad crossing, the lady who ate the poison and the lady who sent it, the new back-stroke swimming champion and the tenor who sang at the Auditorium. Well, the Fanneals and the Scofields, with Win's wives,

pushed them all off the page that day; we had it solid.

When I looked at the picture of Win's last wife, Shirley of the yellow hair, knowing she was also Christina, you may imagine I had some arguments with myself about staying silent.

A buyer was bothering me all through this time. I'd told the doorkeeper and the telephone girl, "Turn off everybody you can." But weak words had taken no effect upon this gentleman who, by his own account, was one Klangenberg, a keeper of a delicatessen on a fourth-rate street off Larrabee. He demanded to see me personally about a claim over a shipment of Hawaiian pineapple.

"He will see you, sir," my office manager reported. "He says you promised to see him."

I shook my head.

"He says to say to you, sir, if you don't remember," my manager continued, "that when you promised, he asked you about Smetsheen of Minneapolis."

I sat up at that; for Jerry was the one who had last asked me about Smetsheen of Minneapolis. I went out to see Klangenberg, who was a tall, phlegmatic Swede entirely positive

on the subject of pineapple and quite fluent about it until he had drawn me off alone with him. Then he said, “ ‘ Kidnapped ’ and ‘ Westward Ho ’ says to Steve, ‘ They crossed us last night; but stick. Not a word; you can help and we’ll get them. Stick, Steve.’ ”

That was all he would say; when I asked him anything more, he went back to pineapple; he was a buyer again, seeking satisfaction on a claim.

This word, which surely was from Jerry, of course helped me to stick. It meant to me that he’d tried to prevent the murder and, having been “crossed” somewhere, had failed; but he counted on me to stick while he kept after Keeban.

A few minutes later, Fred Scofield ’phoned me and asked me to come up to his father’s place.

VII

I KEEP MY OWN COUNSEL.

WHEN I arrived at the big gaudy house, where I had watched Shirley singing last evening, the coroner's men were filing out; they'd completed their examination. Police were all about the doors, keeping back a crowd; the officers passed me and Fred came down almost immediately and took me into the long, gay room where Shirley had played and sung.

The shades were drawn to-day but as they were white they let in plenty of light; the glass doors to the hall were closed and so, though we could talk without being heard, we could be seen from the hall and we could see most of the lower part of the house and also the stairs.

Fred pointed first to a French window, which opened on the lawn upon the lake side; it had been forced open and now was braced shut, with the catch torn out, the screws hanging.

"Here's where he came in," Fred told me.

“Who?” I said.

“Jerry.”

“He was alone?”

“Nobody else was seen. Apparently he went first to the sideboard in the dining room.” Fred gazed across the hall. “He made a noise there.”

When Fred stopped, I commented, “The papers say he made it intentionally.”

Fred nodded. “He wasn’t after silver. That was simply a bluff. He brought a bag with him and emptied two drawers into it. There it is.”

A canvas sack, like a mail pouch, lay in the corner and bulged half full. I didn’t bother to examine it. I was trying to figure out Fred’s attitude towards me: he wasn’t expressing much but keeping hold of himself pretty firm.

“Jerry made the rattle with the silver,” Fred went on, “to draw father downstairs. He did it.

“As father appeared on the landing, Jerry fired from here — from beside this silk hanging. He fired twice; and neither before the shots nor between them nor afterwards did Jerry make any attempt to hide, in spite of the portière right there; and the light was on.

He hit father both times; and father's pistol went off in his hand as he was falling; father fired wild, undoubtedly, but in Jerry's general direction." Fred showed the bullet hole near the door. "Jerry wasn't hit; but he did a complete job with his gun. He hit father first ——"

I stopped Fred. "I know from the papers," I said.

"Well, they had that right. Father lived about five minutes. He fell on the landing and was dead before they carried him up."

Fred's voice cracked; and I put my hand on his arm without saying anything. Old Win, if he had played the fool towards the end of his life, at least had showed good nerve at the finish; and when everything else was said, he was Fred's father. When Fred was a boy, Winton Scofield had been a good father; no one called him a fool then. Every one knows the thousand touches of memories of fondness from a father; and Fred was thinking of them.

He went on telling: "Shirley ran down to him as soon as he fell; she must have been nearly behind him when he got the second bullet. She wasn't hurt but she certainly took a big chance to help father. Rowan reached him maybe a minute later."

"Rowan, the butler?" I said.

"That's right."

"How long has he been in your family?"

"I can't remember when he hasn't been."

"He saw the actual shooting, as the papers say?"

"Not the firing of the shots. Father was down when Rowan arrived at the top of the stairs; but Jerry wasn't gone. Rowan saw him plainly. That's one of the surest things."

"What is?"

"That Jerry showed himself; he made no effort either to hide when father came down or to get away immediately afterwards."

"Where was Thurston when he saw Jerry?"

"He'd just come in from the wing through that door."

"He shot at Jerry, they say."

"Yes; and missed. Jerry fired once at him and grazed him. Then Jerry got out."

Fred and I looked each other over. I was thinking, "Jerry didn't do that but it is no use telling you so."

Fred said to me, "You ran into Shirley last night."

I admitted it.

He went on, "After you'd had me to lunch

to talk over father's affairs, Steve. I've not mentioned that to the reporters or even to the police yet; but of course I've been thinking about it."

"Mentioning it?" I said.

"I wanted this talk with you first, Steve. Why did you call me yesterday and afterwards smash Shirley's car? What did you know?"

I stared at him and shook my head.

"Yesterday at lunch," Fred kept at me, "you asked me particularly about father's engagements for last night; you asked whether Shirley would drive down to meet him. I told you she would."

I had nothing to do but to nod at this.

Fred asked directly, "You smashed into her car to stop her?"

I stared at him and kept thinking of Jerry's "Not a word to any one" and the message Klangerberg brought me from "Kidnapped" and "Westward Ho" which begged me "to stick." Yet I had to say something here or I might as well, since my actions already had spoken for me.

"Yes, Fred; I smashed into her to stop her from meeting your father."

"I was sure of it. You had reason to think,

yesterday, that something was going to happen to him? ”

There was nothing for it but another nod at this.

“ Where did you get your reason? ”

I might as well have told him; he told me that he knew I got it from Jerry. He held the police theory with this variation; I had been having some sort of communication with Jerry through which I had stumbled upon the idea that something was going to happen to Winton Scofield. I had got the notion that it was going to happen through his wife, and so, in my stupid way, I'd driven up to the house deliberately to smash into her car and scare her out of whatever plan she had in her mind.

Fred was emotionally worked up, of course, he believed that I meant well by what I tried to do; he didn't doubt I meant well now. He didn't blame me for having supposed when I found something was planned against his father that Shirley was in it.

“ That's what I thought,” he told me, “ when Rowan 'phoned me this morning and got me out of bed to tell me, ‘ Mr. Fred, your father's shot.’ ”

“ The family — Kenyon and I — always fig-

ured, naturally, that money was what Shirley was after. That's why we fixed his affairs so she could never get much, even if father had wanted to give it to her. He didn't have it to give; we had him on an allowance. The only big sum she could get in a lump was his life insurance, which he made over to her. He carried it from the old days, nearly half a million."

Here was some of the stuff I'd come for. All morning my mind had been reaching for a motive, you see, — why old Win Scofield had found a place on Keeban's board and why his number had come to the top just now. Fred talked on and made it perfectly plain to me.

While he talked, I put myself in Keeban's place for a while and tried to take things from his point of view. I went back a bit to do this — back a few months to the time when old Win, divorced once more and rejuvenated, had arrived again at the cabarets and resumed beau-ing about with the girls. I thought that when Shirley — or Christina — had met him, she talked him over with Keeban and they'd marked him down between them for easy meat. She married him to get away with the big money old Win was supposed to have but hadn't; for

Fred and Kenyon had seen to that, as I've mentioned. Win took her to Paris and brought her back to live with him on an allowance.

Maybe from the first she had had her eyes on the old man's insurance; but I didn't think so. I thought, "She got into this marriage with an idea of an easy get-away with a pile; and when Ken and Fred fooled her, she decided to fool them; she saw Keeban again and they decided to get that insurance money. But they had a big difficulty with that; they had to do more than merely 'croak' old Win; they had to do it so Shirley would not possibly be connected and so the insurance money would be paid over to her and she could get away with it."

There, surely, was a job for them when the family and friends thought what they did of Shirley.

Fred was saying to me, "Ken and I got bothered about that insurance. In the first place, we didn't want Shirley to have the money, half a million for marrying father; then it was costing us over thirty thousand a year to pay the premiums; and, also, we figured it might be dangerous as a temptation.

"Not that we thought Shirley'd kill father

directly, Steve; but there's many a way to shorten a man's life, indirectly. Father played he was young again. Well, all she'd have to do would be to over-encourage him with her eye on that half million. Anyway, Ken and I decided to stop paying the premiums on that insurance — save ourselves about thirty thousand a year and make father a little safer."

Of course, this told me why old Win's number had jumped to the top of the board just now; the sons were stopping his insurance. Fred continued:

"But since the insurance was still in force, I couldn't help thinking of that when Rowan called me; I couldn't help thinking Shirley was mixed up in that murder. Then Rowan told me it was Jerry Fanneal who'd shot father and I knew Shirley couldn't have anything to do with it."

Fred talked on; but I didn't pay much attention for a few minutes; for now I could see through the rest of Keeban's scheme; I could see not only why he had shot Win Scofield, but why he had done it himself and why he had shown himself in the doing, making no attempt to hide.

For he wanted to be seen; he wanted to be

identified, particularly by Rowan. For Rowan would identify him, as Rowan did, for Jerry Fanneal; and, so identified, no one would connect Shirley with the murder. Who was Jerry Fanneal, in these days? A wild, irresponsible criminal, a man from nowhere who had betrayed the breeding bestowed upon him and had "reverted." As he had attacked and robbed Dorothy Crewe, now he had entered Win Scofield's house and shot him either wantonly or for some old, brooded-over pique; that was what the newspapers assumed and the police and even Win Scofield's sons who had most hated and doubted Shirley.

Fred was feeling badly over how he'd ridiculed his father the last time he'd talked with me and how he'd mistaken Shirley. "She was right there beside father and she never thought of herself, Rowan says," Fred repeated to me. "She held him while he died and ——"

"How's she now?" I asked.

"Nearly collapsed. She gave her evidence to the police and afterwards to the coroner. She's in bed now."

"Can I see her?"

"You?" said Fred. "Why?"

"She's accused Jerry."

“ So has Rowan ; why don't you talk to him ? ”

“ I will,” I said, “ afterwards. Do you mind asking her if she'll see me ? ”

He went up himself and came down with her excuses. But I had expected them and I'd written on one of my cards “ Bulls and Beefers ” ; just that and I'd put it in an envelope unsealed. I knew Fred wouldn't look in it when he took it up to her.

“ She'll see you,” said Fred when he came down again.

VIII

A LADY DISCREDITS ME.

SHE was not in bed but was lying upon it in a negligee — a silk and lace, pink and white creation which was originally no garment of grief. She was pink and white herself, except for her bobbed hair of bronze and for her big eyes which were blue. She displayed a good deal of herself, especially the beauty of her bosom; she did this not with any evident design of the moment but probably upon the general principle that it was never a disadvantageous thing for her to do.

She was alone in the room when I entered and Fred Scofield, who came up with me, dropped back at the door. She gazed at me, making hardly a motion, and waited for me to open the meeting.

I did it formally, with that door open behind me; I said the stupid tosh I felt expected to say.

“Shut the door and sit down,” said Shirley.

The first part was important, so I did it; then I strolled to the foot of her bed and stood. She lay looking at me, one hand holding a cigarette box which she tapped with her fingers; but she wasn't smoking.

I was realizing I had never met up with a murderess before — at least not with a girl who'd done her bit in a bump off for money.

Of course since I had, in my own right, a normal list of acquaintances of fair size, I knew a woman or two who'd shot friend husband; but the moving impulse was not financial. The widow — I mean the woman who immediately made herself the widow — in one case happened upon husband with another lady on the wrong landing; in the other case, she'd become peeved about something purely private and so highly sensational when sobbed out on the witness stand, and followed by an effective faint, that the jury not only justified her but acquitted her with cheers.

The widow Scofield, lying here on the bed before me, failed to fall in that same class in my mind. I doubted if she would in the emotions of any jury; and some doubt of this nature seemed to flit across the eyes of blue which kept watching me. She was gambling, if not with

her life itself, at least with her liberty for life; and her stake, if she won, was the neat little sum of five hundred thousand dollars to enhance her joys of freedom.

Elsewhere in this house the aged youth, her husband, lay dead; and whatever was to happen, her chapter with him was concluded and she could not contrive to conceal from me a certain relief at that. Perhaps I imagined it, with my picture of her at her piano last night still haunting my mind; yet I'm not imaginative. I felt her saying to herself, as she gazed at me, "Well, whatever's to come next, *that's* over. Twenty-two with sixty-seven, rejuvenated!"

She said aloud to me, "What did you mean by the words on your card?"

"If you don't know," I said, "why did you change your mind, after you had the card, and send for me?"

She didn't respond; she lay waiting, watchfully, and let me look her over and think her over with all the deliberation I wanted. She seemed to me not so slight as that Christina who'd met me at the river ledge with Keeban; but I knew enough about the effect of negligee, and of a figure loosed from a girdle, to allow

for more fullness now. Her hair was bronze; but yellow over that bronze would have been easy enough to manage, especially in the dim light of that dock room. Her manner of speech had changed; yet I was wholly sure she was Christina.

At the next moment, she admitted it. "I know what you meant, Steve," she said, speaking my name as she had in that room by the river. "You think you have something on me, do you?"

"You're Christina," I said.

"Right! Call in my step-son Fred and whoever else you care to; I've something to confess which I should have told the police this morning — but I didn't. Yet it didn't hurt anything to hold it back. Call him in!"

She sat straight and raised an arm and pointed to the door in some cabaret imitation of a grand gesture. "Open the door," she ordered me.

I opened it and went out and found Fred. "She's something to say to us," I told him. I decided to include nobody else just then, though there were police enough everywhere and all keen to listen. Fred and I went into her room and closed the door. She motioned us to seats

beside the bed as though she might be Madame Récamier on her couch receiving a couple of her lesser courtiers.

"Fred, I can tell more about the shooting last night; I'm going to do it," she said, looking at Fred, not at me. "You can decide how much to give out to the police — to the 'bulls,' " she added, deliberately blunting her speech and gazing at me. She swung back to Fred.

"I come from the cabarets, you know; maybe you've thought sometimes that I come from worse. Anyway, you treated me like you did."

"I'm sorry," said Fred and waited.

"That I didn't come from worse wasn't any fault of Jerry Fanneal. He was hot after me — hot after me."

Here was the start of a counter-attack on me; I felt it and demanded, "When was that?"

"Oh, before I married; long before the big surprise to his swell friends and family when he threw Dorothy Crewe into the street. He was comin' down to the cabarets for a long time. Didn't you know it, Mr. Steve Fanneal?"

"Yes;" I said. "Often I went with him."

"But often not; isn't that so? Tell the truth!" This was a straight challenge.

"Sometimes not," I granted.

“ I guess not! Well, you should’ve seen some of those ‘ sometimes.’ The boy was crazy; I seen it! ” In her excitement, she was forgetting her “ g’s ” and the tenses she could speak correctly when she tried to; she was a cabarèt Récamier now. “ Clean crazy. He kept it under when he was back with his swells and you; but when he was down with us, he blew the lid some distance off, I’m telling you. I made him crazier than most, for he couldn’t get me. He thought I’d fall for money. Not me!

“ I was glad to get married to a decent man, if he was a bit old; and glad to get away, believe me! Then we made the mistake of comin’ back. I didn’t want to, as you know; but the boys wanted father and me to cut down expenses. So we had to come. Anyway, with me married and Jerry mixed up with another skirt — and a swell one, too — I figured he’d forget his old grief about me. But you know what he did to his lady friend; well, when he’d made himself all lonely again, he seems to have got me back on his busted brain. Anyway, he sent word to me to come meet him.”

“ How did he send word? ” This was from me.

“Telephoned.”

“Why didn’t you inform the police?” That was another interjection of mine; and she came back at me through the wide, wide opening I’d left her. “Why didn’t you, when he slipped word to you to meet him?”

Fred failed to interrupt; he was too busy looking and listening. I reserved my reply and she went on:

“He mentioned to me that, if I set a squeal, I’d hear from it; also that I’d better meet him. He wanted money to get away. Of course he couldn’t sell those Crewe diamonds at any sort of price now; there was too much danger in handling them, with everybody watching for ’em; and too much loss if he had ’em cut. He wanted cash money and he thought I could bring it. Remember, a couple a weeks ago,” she said to Fred, “I tried to get some considerable cash from you?”

Fred admitted that.

She said, “That was to give to Jerry Fanneal. I got afraid of him. I wanted him to get out. When I couldn’t raise the cash, I said I’d help him get it from his own family; and so I put up the talk for him to Steve Fanneal.”

“What?” said Fred.

She had to tell him again and when she was through she referred Fred to me. "Let him tell it now."

She had me in the hole; and she knew it; and Fred saw it. I had no chance at all of convincing Fred that the man I met with her was not Jerry but Keeban. Here was she denying, like everyone else, that Keeban could exist; here was she explaining how Jerry had come to do this murder. I knew better than to try to tell my story.

Shirley carried on. "Jerry and I met him and he got the money. Ten thousand in cash, wasn't it?" she examined me. "If he denies it, Fred, ask the teller in his bank — last week Thursday he got it."

"Did you?" asked Fred.

"I did," I said.

He nodded to Shirley. "Go on."

"He gave it to Jerry to go away."

"That's right?" Fred asked me.

"That's right," I had to admit.

Shirley continued, "Then Jerry wanted me. He's crazy, you see. Sometimes he's all right, like anybody else; then he's like when he took that necklace from Dorothy Crewe and tossed her into the street. He said he'd get my hus-

band and then me. Isn't that true? Didn't you know Win was in danger?" Again she was at me.

"Yes; but——"

"But you tried to stop it, of course; with wonderful success! Well, I've nothing on you there, I tried to stop it too!"

Then she broke into crying; and a great chance I had. There she was, a girl all white and pink in her negligee; and tears, real tears! I got out and was lucky to be able to get.

IX

I SEEK THE UNDERWORLD.

FOR sketching a situation, no one ever touched Shakespeare; and he has a line which certainly described my state of dignity during the next days. It's in "Julius Cæsar"; Anthony has just been saying, in some well chosen words which escape me for the moment, how important and prominent a citizen Cæsar was before his last meeting with Brutus, whereas afterwards there was "none so poor to do him reverence."

That's the description which struck me. Lord knows, I was no Cæsar, not even in Chicago; so my fall was not so far, yet the reception at bottom was much the same.

Of course, if you call the incorrigible habits of house servants "reverence" I still had some from them; at least, they kept calling me "sir" and "Mr. Stephen" and somebody sneaked in when nobody else was looking, and turned down my bed, and Warner drew my bath and

saw to my shirts. Down at the office, Miss Severns continued to take my letters in a resigned sort of way; but, in general, I was the joke of everybody that knew I still believed in Jerry.

For a while the police watched me, on the theory that Jerry, after having worked me for ten thousand following his attack on Dorothy Crewe, would probably come back and get me to give him twenty now; but he didn't. So the "bulls" left me alone to go wandering off, as soon as I dared, into the northwest morass of Chicago in search of Klangerberg.

I had that territory as part of my sales district in the days after I had finished college, when father was starting me out in the bean business.

Previously I had gathered, in a theoretical way, that people who went to Princeton or elsewhere to college in the east, and their parents, sisters and other relatives could not provide the number of appetites, locally and in the surrounding States, to account for everything we sold. Not at all; it was perfectly plain that we must sell to any number of people of sorts one would never meet in the general round of sleeping and breakfasting on Astor Street, driv-

ing to the office, lunching at the club, and dining on the Drive and dancing at the Casino. In fact, father took occasion to impress upon me that the caviar and truffle trade of Fanneal and Company would barely pay club dues; what bought motors and butlers and opera boxes was the business in beans — plain baked beans, with or without tomato sauce. And the habit of dinner dances, jaunts to England and the Continent had become family pleasures to the Fanneals solely because a large proportion of the populace living on streets which only by error would ever be listed in mother's address book had taken to the taste of our soups and spaghetti in preference to the purées and macaroni put out under other brands.

Naturally this started me out upon my first unconduted tour of the tenement highways in a chastened and interested frame of mind.

My generation began growing up just in the ebb of the worst lot of social bunk which ever spread over this nation. The last wave of the muck which taught that, if anybody had a million, he took it from the poor by some scheme of social pickpocketing was just subsiding. Some of it splashed over my youthful boots; I remember, particularly, a cheerful cartoon

which the Bolsheviks still brandish probably, and which pictured a lot of us dancing on a ballroom floor which was supported on the bent backs of bowed-over men, women and children. To give it a dramatic touch, the muscular fist of a revolutionist below had broken through the floor and thrust up into the ballroom to the consternation of the degenerate dancers, meant to be us.

One thing is to be said for the experiments in Russia recently; they've made that sort of tosh ridiculous; they've at least suggested, to the brain open to any sort of observation, that the direction and the judgment and the initiative exercised by a man who organizes and builds up a business and keeps it going are in themselves productive factors just as necessary as labor itself and entitled, fairly, to big reward.

Father always taught me that this was where we got ours; we earned it. So when I explored Halsted Street, I did not suffer from any parlor-socialist conviction of personal guilt for housing conditions and juvenile delinquency simply because I was selling these people soup at a profit, net to us, of seven eighths of a cent a can. Naturally I took things as they were, thought about them as little as possible, gave a little

more to the United Charities and the Salvation Army, and kept as far away as I could after my city salesman period was past.

Here I was going back again and with a decidedly new interest in these streets of narrow, dingy, clapboard, three-story dwellings, of drab and dun brick fronts, serving for a shop on the ground level and a dozen tenements above; of "lofts" and ancient cottages — ancient for Chicago — moved back, end to end, behind the buildings now holding the edge of the sidewalk.

I came to a place where the street, following this generation's level of the city, stands above the ground of original days; the walks and roadway are graded up, leaving the disconsolate, paint-specked homes of the first customers of Fanneal and Company down on the dirt where were thrown fifty years ago, as now, our empty cans and papers. The land is so low that the street rises almost even with the second floors; one has to descend rickety steps to reach the doors of gray, ill-lit emporiums of every sort which witness, by their very being, to the amazing force of the proclivity to patronize a neighbor. Half a league from Marshall Field's, preposterous, mediæval peddlers whined under windows shut to the chill smokiness of Decem-

ber city haze; women raised the sash and, after bargaining, bought. Half a block from a motor factory, a blacksmith hand-pumped his bellows to blow coals into heat for shoeing a huckster's horse; fortune tellers beckoned and won business.

I came upon Klangenberg's and descended into an environment of delicatessen where a madonna of the gray shawl — did Raphael or Leonardo ever paint one; if they didn't, it was because they didn't see one — was watching a patented pointer waver before the divisions of a cent on the automatic calculator above the scale which weighed her purchase of pig's feet. A boy picked them up with unclean hands, wrapped them untidily and made change, almost in one motion, on a register which printed a receipt and said with flashing light, "come again; thank you."

The place was heated by a stove before which sat a male model for Rembrandt, if he wanted to paint the "Dyke-keeper" or somebody else strong and dour looking who might wind himself in a muffler.

This was not Klangenberg; at least it was not the complainer about pineapples who had spoken to me of "Kidnapped" and "Westward

Ho." Accordingly, after the Madonna had climbed to the street, I asked the boy for the proprietor.

The "dyke-keeper" turned about, as though his interest in me began with my voice.

"Who wants to see him?" said the boy.

For the emergency — if you don't feel there was one, it's my failure to give you the dyke-keeper — I improvised and benefited by borrowing from Klängenburg himself.

"I've come to see him about his complaint on those pineapples," I said.

"What pineapples?" the youth asked.

"I want to see him personally," I replied.

"Is he here?"

"Maybe," said the boy and locked the cash register before vanishing rearward. Once he reappeared, evidently to view me for the purpose of checking up on my description; he said nothing but after another minute he came back and told me, "He'll see you day after tomorrow."

"What time?" I said.

"This time will do."

I thanked him, while he unlocked the cash register for the resumption of business.

One matter was off my mind when I went away; this was my qualm as to whether I ought to inform the police of Jerry's connection with Klangerberg. They would pick up mighty small change at that address, I thought; and when I returned two days later, I was sure of it.

Though I entered the door at the precise time of my appointment, neither the boy nor the dyke-keeper was there; a little girl of ten years tended the cash register and piled the computing scales with noodles. This child gave me no particular attention until she had cleared the shop of customers, when she said, "That's the door back there."

I went through it to an area between the shop and an old moved-over frame building. Some one — I didn't know who — relieved the child in the shop, for she came out to me and led me through a shed where a horse was stabled. We sidled about another shed and climbed a tunnel of wooden stairs, built on the outside of a clapboard house, and roofed and walled against the weather.

"That's the door," the child said, when we came to the top; obviously she was speaking,

as well as guiding, by instructions. She halted and I went on and knocked at the door.

“Come in,” said Jerry’s voice; and I opened and found Jerry before me.

X

AND LEARN THE WAYS OF ITS LOGIC.

HE had just risen from a bed upon which he had been seated, — a plain, white, iron bed with a red quilt. He looked me over and, welcoming me, waved me to a chair, a plain, wooden chair, not new.

The room was ordinary with striped, cheap paper on the walls; it had a floor of soft wood with a circle of rag carpet; besides the bed and chair, there was a washtand boasting of a bowl and pitcher. Altogether these were the furnishings which a person reared on Astor Street knows to exist but which he has seen only when he has happened to pass an express wagon heaped with the effects of a Halsted Street moving or when, detouring by some strange road, he comes upon the fruit of an "eviction."

By some amazing transmutation, the man before me fitted the furnishings as he fitted the too "tailored" suit, too narrow in lapels, too belted at the waist, too conspicuously "patch

pocketed." He wore a shirt of too obvious silk and overdecorated shoes; and he wore them as if he had been bred to aspire to them and to nothing else.

A look at him and I knew why the police, in all the time they had searched since the robbery of Dorothy Crewe, had never picked him up. They had been searching for an Astor Street resident in some such garments as Jerry had worn by the river; they had expected him, when casting off his accustomed clothes, to don rough, contrasting attire; no one would have expected him to outdo, in his garb, himself as he had appeared before. I, least of all.

Now I understood that this must be his costume when in daytime he had to risk the streets; and I believed that a dozen detectives might meet him, give another glance at his face, but after looking him over, they would laugh at themselves for suspecting him. "Here's a Halsted Street flash," they would say, "trying to make himself look like an Astor Street swell. Jerry Fanneal, of Astor Street, would never do that." An officer, bringing in such a man, would make himself the smile of his station.

You would think that I would have said to myself, "This is Keeban." But the fact was

I didn't suspect him; I was sure at once that he was Jerry. Noticing him more closely, I observed that he had carried his change of caste even into the cut of his hair. No longer was it "feathered" in back in the manner of a University Club barber; he was clipped and shaven on the neck with his hair thickening toward the top till it became almost a tossing mane on the crown.

"This is your room, Jerry?" I said. I'd been wondering all the time where and how he'd been living.

"Mine just now," he replied, looking up and down me. His eyes seemed to find satisfaction in the sight of me; but he did not give me his hand; he did not come closer to me than ordinary nearness in the room made inevitable. I realized that he was deliberately holding away from me and I realized why. Here he was not only hiding from the police, with his life hanging upon every risk of recognition, but here he was also playing the part of Keeban; and he could enter no more deadly undertaking than this of impersonating Keeban, Harry Vine, and going out among Keeban's people.

Of course he could have attained this perfection of nuance only through constant keeping

to it and he would be foolish to endanger it by jumping in and out of character with each opening of his door.

"We can talk here?" I asked.

"What is it?"

It was so much, so many things, that I could lump them all only in the obvious, emotional statement, "I've come to see you."

"Why?"

Since he seemed to demand a practical reason, "Shirley Scofield is being paid the insurance money to-day."

He knew that. "Yes, she got a bunch of it this morning, some yesterday and some a couple of days ago. That's why you tried to look me up day before yesterday, was it?"

"Partly," I said.

"That's all right about her getting the money."

"You mean she wasn't in the scheme to get the money?"

He spoke to me now like Jerry of Astor Street days, I was always slower of wit than he and he was used to telling me obvious things as he did now. "Of course she was after the money, Steve." He stopped a moment and then said, "But not that way."

“What way?”

“By the ‘bump off’; she wasn’t up to it. That was shoved on her, Steve; and she’s sore.”

“At whom?”

He tapped his chest. “Our friend. Sit down, Steve.”

I sat on the chair; he on the bed.

“He’s traveling fast, Steve.”

“Who?”

Again he said, “Our friend. So far as I can trace him back, he hadn’t been worse than a ‘gun’ up to that job on Dorothy Crewe; that was a borderland act for him. He started it out like a ‘gun’ and finished up rough. With Win Scofield, he was all the way a ‘gorilla’!”

“Gunman you mean by ‘gun’?” I asked.

“Almost the opposite, Steve. A ‘gun’s’ a guy who gives action to his brain instead of to his cannon; he gets by without the shootings. A gorilla’s a guy that goes in for the rough stuff. A girl doesn’t worry when she’s got a good ‘gun’ for her gentleman friend; she’s personally as safe with him as with any church warden. He hasn’t any hankering for doing a croak; and he hasn’t any habit of getting out of his troubles that way. But when a guy that

a girl goes with takes to being a gorilla, the skirt's got to watch her step with him. She knows it."

"Where is he now, Jerry?"

"Do you suppose I know?"

"You must know more than I do."

"That's right." He tossed me a box of cigarettes. "Smoke if you want. Nobody'll come for a while. I allowed us a little time, particularly so you may become better acquainted with my friend—" again he tapped his chest—"Keeban, my childhood companion, more recently the robber of Dorothy Crewe and the bumper off of old Win Scofield. He seems not to be indigenous to Chicago soil, Steve. Assuming that he was—and therefore is—a twin of mine, it is likely that my parents were merely visiting here when they loosed me in the park, and you and I met, old Top. Anyway, they must have moved on to New York, for my friend made his reputation there."

"I haven't been able to gather anything about my own people—no more than you can judge from him and me. Maybe they turned us both loose at the same time and I walked into the hands of a wholesale grocer while a gerver picked him up."

“ Gerver? ”

“ Safe-blower, Steve. My friend seems to have made his start as a ‘ peterman ’ and then branched out. He’ll blow a peter yet, they say, to keep his hand in; and he packs with him, when he thinks he’ll find trouble, the peterman’s tube of his trade — a little, corked bottle of soup for emergencies, Steve. Nitro-glycerine, that’s all. Interesting idea, what? ”

“ The nitro? ”

“ No, that the difference between us is the direction we wandered when we got loose — or were turned loose — twenty-five years ago in Lincoln Park. I walked straight into the bean business and he into blowing safes. Was that all there was to it — the angle our feet took across the grass in the park? What do you think, Steve? ”

I shook my head.

“ A man likes to think with Shakespeare that he is master of his fate,” Jerry went on, “ and that fault or strength is in himself, not in his stars. There is no bunch of bunk I hate worse than that environment is to blame for crime and the individual has almost nothing to do with it.”

“ Give Shakespeare credit for thinking it out

further," I said. 'Julius Cæsar' always was a favorite of mine and one thing I knew. "He said, 'Men *at some time* are masters of their fates: the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves.' "

Jerry nodded. "That's right. My friend's clever; he can see now, if he couldn't when he was younger. Then there's something else — a twist in his brain that's not in mine? Yet I don't know: maybe we're identical, inwardly as well as outside. Maybe the difference is that I never knew what it was to want without being able, lawfully, to get. The cards are stacked in this game of civilization which we play."

That hit one of my pet ideas, as I've mentioned; so I objected, "No, they're not."

"I remember what you think, Steve. I liked to think it too; but now I've gone from the side the cards favor to the side that gets the worst of the deal. What in the devil is law, Steve?"

"Law?" I said.

Again he laughed. "You said that, old Top, as though I'd asked 'What is the sun?' It shines on you so, Steve; to ask about it is to you the acme of foolish questions; but it's not to the man who's brought up under the cloud. What is law? I never even looked up a dic-

tionary definition till I got talking to some of my present friends; now here's just what Webster says: 'A rule of conduct established by an authority able to enforce its will.' That's all there is to it — a set of rules drawn up by the first men on the ground, who've grabbed everything in sight, and who naturally want to perpetuate and increase their possessions. Hence they fix up a lot of rules in their favor which they call law. If you come along later, and are boob enough to believe it's best to work with them, you're a good lawful citizen; if you carry a few ideas of your own, and mean to get ahead without asking anybody's permission, you're a lawbreaker."

That peeved me; he saw it and smiled.

"I'm quoting, Steve; quoting."

"Quoting who?"

"Oh, philosophers with any number of aliases. There's no philosopher like a flat-worker or a good gopher man. In the first place, they've plenty of time to think; their hours of actual effort are short, if rather intense; and between them are periods of leisure which may become decidedly protracted, if they're picked up. Those who complain that the ancient Greek art of dialectics is declining simply con-

fess the constriction of their acquaintance. Socrates — so I am convinced, Steve — was a burglar who'd served about two terms when he got so good that Plato picked him up, covered his past and wrote him down. Possibly you noticed in the delicatessen the other day a friend of mine not lacking in muscular development —— ”

“ Oh, the dyke-keeper! ” I said.

“ What? ”

I explained.

Jerry smiled; he knew my ways. “ Any time you're overwhelmed with fear that logic languishes, Steve, start a little argument with him. Now imagine a little boy, like me in my white dress the day you picked me up, walking into hands like his for education.”

“ Oh, that's what you're getting to! ”

“ You've guessed it. Soon you're likely to meet my friend Keeban again — under circumstances which I confess I can't completely foresee; yet whatever they are, it can't be anything but a help to better understand his point of view.

“ Now here we are or were, Steve — my brother and I. I walked into the bean busi-

ness, with its logic, such as it is. What is the end and aim of Fanneal and Company, Steve? ”

“ Why,” I said, “ why to —— ”

“ To what? ”

“ To sell good food.”

“ Why? ”

“ Why, for people to eat? ”

“ Your effort is to increase the consumption of food, isn't it? ”

“ Of course.”

“ You do it for profit, don't you? ”

“ Of course.”

“ Now which is the fact — that most people, here in this country, eat too much or too little? ”

“ Too much.”

“ Which is a decided detriment to health and longevity, is it not? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Then the actual result of your business, which you steadily push for your own profit, is to lessen health and shorten life? ”

I laughed now. But he was at me. “ Why the laugh, Steve? ”

“ That's bunk and you know it.”

“ Where's it bunk, Steve? Where's the flaw? Where, if anywhere, did the fallacy creep in? Now let us leap to the safe-blowing business.

What, my foster-brother Stephen, is the fundamental curse of this country at this time? I'm not asking you a question which seeks any strange or heathen answer. Let us take only the answer that the pulpit itself offers, let us quote not only Christ but the economists and sociologists of our own and other leading conservative universities. What has ruined more families, softened and destroyed the fiber of more individuals, especially the young — who above all should be preserved — than the accumulation of wealth? What else, Steve? ”

I had no answer.

“ Now where do men keep their accumulations of wealth? ”

“ In safes.”

“ Exactly. So, in safes, lies the greatest danger to the individual and to society. Consequently, what else does he do, who removes the contents of the safe and dissipates it, than protect the accumulator and society from the increasing menace of that wealth which, left in the accumulator's hands, would grow and grow till it destroyed all? Who is the friend of society, Steve — he who confesses to increasing the staggering sum of degenerative diseases brought on by overeating which he encourages

for his own profit, or he who, at tremendous risk to himself, and with no hope of public favor when he succeeds, yet sets himself to strike and strike again and again at the very source of danger and decay? ”

Jerry caught his breath. “ Let us remain for a moment, Steve, not in the school of Astor Street but in that of my brother, Keeban.

“ I’ve often wondered, particularly during these last days, what went through his head when he first discovered me. He got a hint of my existence, you know, when we were at Princeton. He could have guessed where I was; and maybe he came out a time or two, to look me over. I wonder what he thought of me. I was to him a ‘toff,’ I suppose; to him, I was running with those whom he despised. For hate and contempt comes into all this, Steve. You’ve got to work up your feelings to carry on any kind of war, and particularly the most personal war of all; you’ve got to talk atrocities and have your hymn of hate. So probably he started hating me.

“ But he was curious about me, too, I bet. Of course he saw a big chance to make a great clean-up by suddenly becoming me some day — or night. There I was, identical with him; I

bet, while he was watching and waiting, he wondered a lot about me.

“He even had a girl like mine; you saw that Christina looked like Dot. He came on here with Christina about six months ago and Win Scofield met her at a cabaret and went crazy over her. We know what happened from the Scofield point of view. From Christina’s and my friend’s — well, he told her to go to it, pick up a million or so and get out. Or maybe she’d do it nicely and legally, assert cruelty and get a divorce with whopping alimony in the most proper way.

“Then Fred and Kenyon thought they’d stop anything like that; they whipsawed the old man out of his control of the company when he was away and had him on an allowance when he got home. They thought they were awfully smart. All they did was sentence their father; that’s all. Meanwhile my friend turned some of his attention back to me, letting the well-known mill of the gods do its bit of grinding on the Scofield affair.

“Harrison Crewe was arriving in dear old Chicago with a nice necklace for daughter Dorothy. The newspapers not only appraised it but advertised its first appearance with all

details. I was to escort daughter and necklace first to the Sparlings' where there would be a wedding, after which the line of march would be down the Boulevard to the Drake. Probably my friend was still in Chicago; if he'd been called to New York on business, he must have jumped the Century and come back again with opportunity pounding on his door like that.

"Well, he arrived and we know what he did."

Jerry looked down and then suddenly up at me. "Seen Dot recently, Steve?"

I nodded.

"She still thinks it was me?"

I had to nod again.

"You've seen her since —" his voice hardened and he finished, "the Scofield bump off?"

"Yes."

"That was me, too?"

"She thinks, you see," I said, "you're no longer yourself."

"Kind of her," said he. "Very. Well, I'd gathered as much from the papers. I don't blame her. Where were we?"

"He'd got the necklace."

"Oh, yes; and Fred and Ken Scofield were informing their father's wife that, after cut-

ting off the old man with an allowance, they were also going to let his insurance lapse. Now, about that time, a queer thing was happening with that young wife — queer if you keep on staring at just what you see from Astor Street. Christina got a hankering for decency.”

“ You mean she liked Win Scofield? ”

“ She liked being his wife — if only for the novelty. The old man, for himself, was nothing to her. She was crazy about Keeban.”

“ Yet married Win Scofield.”

“ ‘ My friend ’ told her to. Probably he was coming to one of the times when he was getting tired of her, anyway; he took her up, off and on; off times, he picked up with other girls. So, till he wanted her again, he thought he’d park her with the Scofield family and let her gather half a million for him.”

“ What did she think when she first saw you? ”

“ Oh, she knew about me, sure enough. Part of ‘ my friend’s ’ plan in planting her in society must have been to help his scheme with me; she was his inside wire on that job and went through with her end so smoothly that no one suspected, no one even mentioned her; she wasn’t even “ Among those present ” printed in the paper

after the Sparling affair. Undoubtedly she'd have gone right through with the arrangement rigged on old Win, if 'my friend' had stuck to original prospectus; but Fred and Ken didn't make that possible. And 'my friend', from his point of view, was left with no other course than to croak old Win. If he was to maintain any sort of discipline, he simply had to do it."

"Discipline of whom? Shirley?"

"For one, among others. My brother," said Jerry, avoiding his previous euphonism of "friend" and speaking with a queer timbre of pride, "had a leadership to maintain and improve, a certain record of success to conserve. A man in his position must, above every one else, save his face; he can let no one smile at him. Here he had let his girl go to old Win Scofield to make him some money and Win's sons had made it impossible, unless somebody croaked Win; so Win had to be croaked; not merely for the money, but to save 'my friend's' face.

"Now Shirley, on the square, tried to stop that; from the time I spoke to you, she was never against you. It's right for her to have the insurance money that's paid; she was not in the scheme of the croaking; nobody can ever show she was."

"She accused you to me," I said.

Jerry nodded. "I've seen the papers. You'll see something else to-night. Win Scofield's widow has her money; and Harry Vine, my friend and yours, Steve — Keeban, we called him — he's saving his face. At the Flamingo Feather, the affair will be."

"Flamingo Feather?"

"You don't know it? Well, neither did I a few weeks ago. I dreamed, no more than you, that such a spot existed; yet to-night it's my place of fate. For 'my friend's' friends go there to-night, Steve, to see what he can show them. It's a date; he's got to be present. The Flamingo Feather's a hall, Steve — one of those halls that the police raid with the reserves in force, with half a dozen wagons, or leave severely alone. There's a masque ball on there to-night — with fancy figures and favors. There's a celebration on, you see; and something to expect."

"You going?"

"I? He'll be there, I said. Do you want to chance it, Steve?"

XI

THE THIEVES' BALL.

THE approach to the floor of the Flamingo Feather was past a bakery, a pawnshop, a drink parlor, all decorous and dreary. Then there was a door distinguished by a bracket extending a black, iron basket in which a yellow electric bulb glowed. Over the street, this and a single iron feather painted flame color made a flaunt of festivity. From the door stretched a hall, tinted Pompeian red and reaching toward gents' smoking rooms and the placarded penetralia of ladies; upward led iron stairs to the ballroom, let by the hour or evening, at rates proclaimed on a card.

I realized, as I entered, that I had heard of this place — or at least of its sister ballrooms — scores of times. For here revelled those indefinite, intriguing organizations named, by their members, "The Apollo Pleasure Club" and "The Brothers of Byzas" (whoever he was) and "the Ten Terpsichoreans," who from their

handbill, pasted on the Pompeian wall, evidently hoped to enroll, at a dollar per gent (ladies with escort free) several hundred paying guests. In fact, few of the coming social functions, advertised in this hall, appeared to be exclusive. Yet I might be in error.

Judging from to-night's bill, which simply said — "Special — To-night: Mask and Costume Ball; Get your tickets in Advance — Special" — one might assume a catholicity of welcome not sustained by the manner of two tall — and masked — gentlemen in the hall beside a little table at the foot of the stairs.

I did not doubt that to-night, at least, there had been an exercise of selection by whomsoever (they were not named on the notice) sold tickets in advance. And here, at the foot of the stairs, was a second inspection. Each masker, or at least one in every group, lifted his cover when passing the table. Jerry did that for the two of us; of course he had tickets and we were passed and, after checking our outer garments, we climbed to the ballroom where jazz was playing.

Jerry was a courtier in doublet and jerkin; he was Sir Walter Raleigh as much as any one else. I was a monk, Erasmus for choice,

in robe and cowl; both of us, as I've suggested, wore masks; about us everywhere were maskers, wigged Colonials, Barbara Frietchies, Mary Pickfords, Cæsars, Cromwells, Charlie Chaplins; then there were Aphrodites, devils and sailors, sashed pirates, queens and kings addicted not so much to any particular personage or period as to an impression of the generically royal in their garb. Many, of both sexes, went in for mere fantastic innovation, concealing electric batteries under silk bodice or skirt, switching on green, red and blue lights in their hair, on their shoulders and elbows while they danced.

They betrayed a penchant for weaponry, too, keeping in decent concealment the short, blue-barrelled automatics of contemporary pattern but evidencing long, decorative — and yet not entirely useless — daggers, rapiers and curved cutlasses.

I had picked my costume partly on the presumption that it had enjoyed a smaller popularity than other offerings at Leventhal's, lessor of garments; partly I was influenced by its exceptional qualities for concealment. There appeared to have been, among the gentlemen who would have been supposed to have obtained

one of those tickets in advance, a pèterman similar to me in height and familiarly known as "Beets" — I am not sure of the spelling, perhaps an "a" appertained — who had affected the monastic in earlier revels. He was, fortunately, a taciturn individual; so nobody expected me to talk much; and nobody talked much to me.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when we arrived, so the ball was already rolling; "the thieves' ball," the papers dubbed it afterwards; yet, of the three hundred persons in the hall at the hour of the swiftest rolling, not fifty actually were thieves. Not fifty were either thieves or worse; not if you counted both sexes, the shoplifters and lay "wires", along with the "guns" and "gervers."

So much I had gathered from Jerry during the afternoon. The actual go-getter in any society is in the small minority; he, or she, supports a host of hangers-on; it is only the armchair dreamer who flatters himself that he who holds him up, who blows his safe, who forges his name, must be a fugitive, hiding and cowering between his sallies forth with gat, with "soup" or with pen. Of course, the gunman or the gerver goes about his business, keeps his hours,

surrounds himself by friends and family even as you and I. He might frequent the Drake or the Blackstone for his pleasure, also, but it would be too suggestive of business. He, too, requires his leisure; so here he was with his friends at the Flamingo Feather.

Maybe a dozen knew what was on that night; not more than that, Jerry told me. He vanished, Jerry did, after we'd been there an hour, leaving me alone with ladies.

I danced, to mighty good music, with a crowned queen of Tudorish bodice, modified by electric lights on the sleeves; with a green-robed girl of red hair with amber lights on her comb; with a white-shouldered Cleopatra, lithe and soft in my arms.

I danced again with Cleopatra and, after midnight, a couple of times more and was having a better time with each encore. Also I was getting acclimated to the diverting atmosphere of that ball. Its manners, of course, were various and, as I explained to myself the different developments, each masker made for himself a personal interpretation of his rôle according to his costume; consequently I witnessed the Puritanical portrayed in contrast with the piratical

between which extremes the private lighting plants extemporized pirouettes of their own.

There was plenty of cheek-to-cheek proximity of partners; plenty of knee to knee. Occasionally a floor committeeman pried a couple a few inches farther apart; but surely it is better to see that done than to observe the need ignored.

Jerry, unless he returned in some new costume, remained away from the floor; and I gave up momentarily expecting him. I got to having a good time on my own account, especially with Cleopatra.

I could not see her face between her brow and lips. Through her mask, I got glimpse enough of her irises to see that they were blue. Her forehead was smooth and white and pretty; intelligent looking, too. Her lips were bowed and smiled pleasantly and were not too much carmined; she had a fine little chin, pretty and also firm. She'd a lovely neck and shoulders, smooth as satin; and she'd small, strong little hands with beautiful, pink nails, and slender, shapely feet.

I'm not given to noticing quite so much about a girl; but with this one, I couldn't help it. She was an alluring little crook. I suppose the vizor had something to do with it; the hidden always beckons a fellow on; but what kept me coming

was the thought, — what was she doing there? What was her line or her lay? If she were merely a guest of this ball, whose guest was she?

Naturally, at a masque — and most naturally at that masque — people dispensed with introductions. She was Cleopatra and no one gave her a modern name; as Cleopatra she lacked a Cæsar, though many were present. She lacked even an Anthony; a Magellanic mariner seemed to be her rallying point. I don't know why I called the gentleman Magellan; if he'd been huskier I'd have called him Columbus. Somehow I've always imagined Magellan quick and slight and more given to liquor than Columbus. This mariner was; given to liquor, I mean. Cleopatra bothered about him for a time and then blithely abandoned him, much to my benefit.

“What shall I call you?” she asked me. So far, we had got on without names.

“Erasmus,” I said, to try her as much as anything.

To my amazement, she knew the old boy. “Holbein would be thrilled by you.” And, as she danced with my arm about her, I could feel that she was sizing me up anew. I had said

“Erasmus” as I might have said Claude or Skeeze; but since she knew Erasmus, naturally she wondered how I knew. Beets, my predecessor in these garments, would not have known; but Cleopatra had known for some time that I was not Beets.

About that time came a diversion; in fact, *the* diversion. Sir Walter Raleigh, escorting an Elizabethan lady, appeared on the floor. Both were masked; but under the garb of Raleigh were the limbs of Jerry; and I knew the Elizabethan lady, too. Here was Christina, come to the ball.

I looked again at her Raleigh, with rapier at his side, dagger at his waist. Not Jerry, I told myself, with pulses thrilling; here was Keeban. This was what I was to expect; Keeban, to show off, had carried Christina to the ball. That day, she had won the last of her money; this night he had regained her, he was to take her away; but before going, here was his flourish, his defiance, his display!

He put his arm about her, and, as they began to dance, I heard in the buzz of voices the whisper of his name. Here was Harry Vine, they were saying; here was Christina. Between them, they'd more than half a million; he'd put

over his job just as he schemed it. Nobody could beat that boy; if they tried to, the sod for them.

It looked like madness for them to be here to-night; but madness marks the big job.

Here was Keeban, Harry Vine. He had boasted that he would bring his woman, whom some thought had gone away from him. Surely he had arranged his get-away with her; but before he used it, here he was proving that she was his.

But she wasn't his! At least, so Jerry had told me. She'd come with him, but she was, in fact, no longer his. Something more was on to-night than that rapiered and daggered Raleigh expected. I danced with Cleopatra, watching them dance, and also I looked now for the reappearance of the other Raleigh, who was Jerry.

The number ended; now clapping; now encore. My arms circled Cleopatra; I clasped her. Keeban clasped Christina.

As I watched his arm go around her, so exactly as Jerry's clasped his partner in the dance, I got another jerk. Maybe he was Jerry! Maybe what was to happen between Jerry and his "friend", his brother, had happened outside. I

sent that thought out of my head and watched them.

What a pair they made, she young, lithe, full of life, perfect in her soft proportions. I thought of how I had seen her singing that night before the shooting and how she received me — like Récamier, on her couch — afterwards. But here she was dancing another theme. And he, dancing with her, was quick, graceful, courtly. Clearly they had done this dance often together. Some one cried out a request and they went into a fancy figure.

The rest of us cleared a circle in the center of the hall; we danced slowly about the perimeter while they in the middle twined arms, turned, confronted each other, flung each other away and circled back to clasp again, dancing.

They had become so professional now, that, watching their steps, I forgot for the moment that he was the murderer of old Win and she had been old Win's wife, in the plot for the Scofield money. Jerry had told me that, when the plot turned to murder of her husband, she had tried to stop it. Had they fallen out? Well, I should see. This was a time not to think, but to watch.

Some one switched the lights off. It proved

the signal for those who had lights in their hair and on their dresses to gather inside the circle and give their soft, colored glows to Christina and Harry, dancing together.

He seized her, tossed her away, caught her again and, before again he tossed her, she altered the figure. As he caught at her, she eluded him and, laughing, she snatched at the sheath on his belt. She had his dagger; and the lights — blood-red, green and amber — glinted on the flashing blade as she bared it, drew back and thrust at him.

He caught her wrist, as girls about me gasped; he held and twisted at her hand but she broke his hold and darted away from him. He stood a moment, staring; then he grinned at her who, off at the edge of the circle, again was dancing as if that thrust at him, his snatch just in time, his twist and her breakaway all were part of the figure. But they weren't. He knew; I knew; many others knew. There, in that flash of shining steel, she had stabbed at him to kill him.

Why? Jerry's words to me gave at least a clue. He was her man, who had been a "gun" but who had become a "gorilla"; he had shot Win Scofield in her sight, slaughtered him be-

fore her. She had tried to stop that killing; and his murder of the old man in his house had been Harry Vine's answer. Also he had served notice for her to come back to him; so she had done so, — to kill him.

This was what Jerry meant I should see; this was the vengeance of Shirley. Not vengeance alone; also an attempt at self-protection. She knew, going back to a "gorilla", that sooner or later he would kill her. Perhaps she expected death from him only a little later that night. So she had struck there before them all and, failing, made her life surely forfeit. Now, without doubt, Keeban — Harry Vine — would kill her.

Not there, surrounded by that circle, as she would have slain him, had her thrust gone home. A girl kills a man that way; but not a man his woman. This rapiered Raleigh knew that. He made no motion to attack her; he merely watched her, and he grinned while she danced and tried to play it was all pretense.

Now her partner started toward her; and everybody watched him, and watched her, and nobody interfered. Nobody thought that, when he caught her, immediately and there he would kill her. I, at least, did not even imagine that. He was moving to capture her now and to carry

her away; and, to these maskers in the circle, that was all his own affair as, to them, her stroke at him had been her business. I realized that had she sent the dagger home, no one would have touched her as no one, after she had failed and was doomed, would raise a hand to help her now.

She knew it also; and she looked to no one for aid. She merely danced away, his dagger in her hand, smiling and still playing at pretense.

Fingers circled my wrist; they were Cleopatra's. Small, strong, intense fingers they were, half holding, half warning me.

I had not been aware that I betrayed, through my mask and cowl, the impulse which heated me. Of course I wanted to help that girl who had struck and failed; I wanted to seize him who grinned and stole upon her, and of course I knew I could not; and those slim fingers circling my wrist doubly warned me. Here was business between two persons — girl and man — which was their own. She still had chance to strike again and kill him, if she could; he had his right to capture.

She circled away and he followed about the edge of the ring, not gaining upon her. Suddenly he snatched a cape from the shoulders of

a watcher; he wound it about his left arm and, with that arm forward to take her stab, he darted on her.

He did it so quickly, so surely, that it seemed prearranged. For the moment, it seemed that the motion must have been practiced and it was all play. Then he was on her; she made a stab and he caught it on that bundled cape. With his other hand, he had her wrist; he had her. No acting in that; no possible pretense.

It was not play; he had her! The circle knew it was not play; some of them would surely save her. I must have jerked again; for Cleopatra's fingers pressed tighter on my wrist.

"Where's Jerry?" I thought. "What's he doing?"

The light was lessening. A girl switched off the glows which burned upon her head and dress; another did the same; another. "Lights!" somebody called; but before the room lights could go on, other dancers had darkened the colored bulbs they wore.

The dagger rang on the floor; and, as she dropped it, Christina surprised her partner out of his hold on her. She darted back. The circle behind her opened and closed. She was through

and the circle was all dark. Then some one screamed.

At that instant, I was sure it was Christina; I was sure he had her again. Then, I did not know. There was a whistle outside. "The bulls — bulls — bulls."

Cleopatra's fingers freed my wrist. I groped for her but she was gone. "Bulls — the bulls" men and girls said. No one cried again for lights; no one turned them on. In the dark, I felt streams of escape in opposite directions. Outside somebody was shooting; came shouts; now the clanging of patrol cars. Surprise was gone.

I felt myself sucked into an eddy of escape repulsed from one side and cast upon the other. We reached air and iron stairs. Pistols flashed before us; our van cleared the way. I came down to the alley pavement and stumbled over a man shot or fallen. I crossed the alley and reached a passage. A girl's hand led me through and, a block down, we found refuge.

I didn't know the girl. I never saw her face. It was dark and she left the shed before me. I dropped my robe there; and when I walked out, the circle of capture had closed and was still contracting, not expanding. The police took,

altogether, thirty-six persons, — twenty girls, sixteen men.

The "bulls" booked them all but proved able to hold nobody. They showed prison records against seven but nothing then "out" against any one. The pick-up, as shown on the picture pages, included a Tudor queen, two of the lighting plants, a pirate, a Turk, a Cæsar but not Cleopatra; not even Magellan. Not the Elizabethan Christina, not Raleigh, either Jerry or Keeban.

The raid was made to get Jerry and Christina; for some one had tipped it that they'd be at the Flamingo Feather. The tip told even the time.

I kept wondering about that tip and who gave it. Not Jerry, I thought; but where, during the end of that evening, was Jerry? And I considered that it was only after he had gone that Keeban had come in, — or the man in mask whom I'd called Keeban, and who did that dagger dance with Christina.

She'd told me, at that time when she lay on her bed like Madame Récamier, that Jerry had killed old Win; she showed no knowledge at all of Keeban.

You'll understand I kept my thoughts to my-

self; and I kept to myself that I'd danced at the Flamingo Feather that night of "the thieves' ball," which was raided. The newspapers, always keen for the colorful, played up the pictures they took of those twenty girls and sixteen "crooks" in costume; but the papers did not even know of that dagger dance. Much less could they give news of the final consequence of it.

In my mind, when I thought of it, Keeban had caught Christina. In my mind, he had her somewhere wholly in his power; at his own time, in his own manner, he would punish her. Imagining this, I would get up and walk about; I felt I had to do something. But where were they? Where was Jerry? If he were not the Raleigh who had returned; if he were not the man who had danced, where had he gone? What had happend to him?

I learned, during those days, the completer truth of what Jerry had told me of the underworld. It wasn't a place; not at all. For the places, they all remained. There was the Flamingo Feather, dull and drab by daylight with its door beyond the bakery, the pawnshop, the soft-drink parlor; its light was out; its iron basket rusted and filled with wet, melting snow.

At night "The Apollo Club" — giggling clerks — consorted there; and then "The Brothers of Byzas", who, if he was like his kin, was a teamster, apparently.

Gone, gone from the Flamingo Feather were my friends of the masque, vanished as wholly as yesterday's snow from the basket over the door.

Nor could Klangenberg's help me. There was the door within which stood shelves heaped with delicatessen; but a strange child pondered over the keys of the cash register which invited "come again." He knew nothing of Klangenberg who had "gone away." Not even the "dyke-keeper" remained.

Exploring the alley alone, I penetrated to the hooded stairs atop which Jerry had greeted me. Now an old wigged woman, crippled and fluent of Yiddish, kept vigil there.

I sought Leventhal, the lessor of my Erasmus garb cast off in that shed and never recovered. I came offering cash to pay for the robe. He took the money, shaking his head; he would remember neither the robe nor me. There was no tracing, through him, of others who wore his clothes that night. They were vanished like Villon's lovers:

Alas for lovers! Pair by pair
The wind has blown them all away;
The young and yare, the fond and fair,
Where are the Snows of Yesterday?

Young and yare; that was Cleopatra! Where was she? Who was she? More than who, whose might she be? Well, what good for me to wonder and worry? What good to feel, by remembrance, the softness of her hand in mine when we danced; and then the iron warning of her fingers on my wrist! What good to see in mind the beauty of her shoulder and the smallness of her foot. They were gone, all gone; and, if I looked at the whole business sensibly, I would see that somehow, in ways not yet entirely clear, I had been of service in the game of getting for Christina and her man insurance of five hundred thousand with which they had got away; or he had, after taking it from her.

XII

I DISCOVER "THE QUEER."

THEN Tom Downs was getting married and he asked me to usher, so there I was in Caldon's, picking out an after-dinner coffee set to be sent to the bride; and a lot I knew about breeds and varieties of Hepplewhite and Colonial and Queen Anne. Now if setter dogs could only be wedding presents, or beans, I'd be right on the spot; or a bag of Rio coffee would be all right; but the coffee container never meant anything to me. So I was about to judge by the good old way, which has proved such a help to the high cost of living, and order the most expensive when I heard a voice that I knew and turned about.

She wasn't speaking to me but to the clerk at the watch-repair counter, which was just opposite the coffee sets:

"Bad?" she was saying. "Oh, you must mean counterfeit. Did I really have one? How interesting; please let me see." And she put a

small gloved hand across the counter for the bank note which he held.

A new twenty, I noticed it was, and then I looked again at her. Without any doubt, I knew her voice; I was absolutely certain I'd talked to her; but her face was a complete surprise to me. A pleasant surprise, right enough; she was rather a little thing, slender but with rounded neck and arms, in actually beautiful proportions; about twenty-two in age, I guessed. She had nice, clear white-and-pink skin; good, bold little mouth and a sort of I-dare-you-chin. Her nose turned up the barest trifle, darned attractively, and though I couldn't from the side get a view of her eyes, it was pretty plain they weren't easy ones to meet. Anyway, that clerk wobbled before her as he apologized that the government that week had just warned the banks and all big business houses in Chicago that new and unusually dangerous counterfeits of twenty-dollar Federal Reserve Notes were in circulation.

"Dangerous?" said my friend. "You mean the ink's poisonous or something like that?" She seemed glad she had her gloves on.

The clerk laughed. "Oh, it's quite safe that way, Miss Wellington. They mean, it's an un-

usually good job of counterfeiting; very hard indeed to detect. In fact, they say in this case the printing and coloring is actually perfect, to all practical purposes. It is only the paper which is enough off so that an expert, like our cashier, suspected it."

Miss Wellington opened her hand bag. "How interesting! But would you ask your clever cashier to look over these bills for me to make sure they're all right? Why, what a frightful place Chicago is; I got in just this morning from Denver and bought a few things at Field's and along Michigan Avenue, breaking a hundred-dollar bill somewhere, I can't remember exactly where, and getting change ——"

I heard, of course, but didn't actually pay any attention to the rest she was saying. Miss Wellington of Denver! Now I didn't know any Miss Wellington of Denver or any other place; but I did know that girl; her voice, anyway. She certainly had talked to me; and also, I was sure, I knew her hands and her figure, if I didn't know her face. She had one glove off now, feeling the texture of the counterfeit bill in comparison with the others in her hand bag, which

proved to be quite all right. Yes; I knew that pretty, slender, strong little hand.

She was going out now, after having given to the cashier — who had come up — the information that she *thought* she had broken her hundred dollars at Field's and got her change there and supplying him with her Chicago address as the Blackstone Hotel.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the coffee-set salesman, "did you make a choice?"

"Oh, shoot along the Queen Anne," I said; and with the word "queen" something caught me.

"What name, sir?" said the salesman.

"Cleopatra," I said, for I had it; and I got under way without worry over the impression I was leaving behind me. For now I had placed Miss Wellington of Denver, and I knew why I was familiar with her voice, with her hands, with her figure, and also why her face was a surprise to me. For she was Cleopatra, my *ci-devant* partner of the dances at the Flamingo Feather where I was ostensibly "Beets", the safe blower in a hired Erasmus get-up, and she was mate to a lightly built Magellanic gent, who sopped up rather too much that evening and yet had proved nimble as any on the getaway.

I was absolutely sure of her; but she didn't suspect me. I had been all swaddled in robes and cowls that night, you remember. Of course she'd heard my voice then, but she couldn't have recognized it from anything I'd muttered at Caldon's. I'm one of those mute buyers. So here I was, trailing her down Michigan Boulevard and wondering what in salvation to do.

From a Puritanical point of view, I had one plain duty; for I couldn't feel the slightest doubt that Cleopatra there a few steps in front of me — present alias Miss Wellington of Denver — had never obtained that dangerous twenty in change. If she had just participated in any financial transaction at Field's, I felt that Marshall III might just as well mark himself down twenty dollars or forty (or some higher multiple of twenty) on the total loss page of the day's doings. Unquestionably I should, by all rules of citizenship, hand her over to the traffic officer at the approaching corner and ask him to blow his whistle to call the wagon.

On the other hand, my acquaintance with Cleopatra which now put me in position to suspect her (of course suspect doesn't half say it) had been gained under circumstances which any one would call privileged. The whole fact of

my presence at that dance was under a sort of sporting condition; and I couldn't forget how this girl, herself, had held on to my wrist, warning me and keeping me out of trouble.

I actually owed something to her; but that wasn't what I was thinking of, as I followed her. I was watching what a wallop she was as she went down the boulevard; much the neatest one in sight. She was rather small, I've said; and trim; wonderfully turned, she was, and dressed in plain, tailored things which always look the best, I think. I almost collided with a couple of my friends — girls — from up the Drive and around on Astor. We nearly crashed because they were looking, too. Everybody was gazing, at least a bit, at Miss Wellington; yet she wasn't endeavoring at all to attract attention. Quite the opposite. She simply couldn't help it.

She had me heeling her, therefore, without the least actual idea of handing her over to any one; but also without any intention of letting her go. For here I'd found her, after all that world of Jerry's and of the Flamingo Feather had vanished into air.

I began to understand that of course they hadn't really vanished. They'd been about — those queens and ladies, those sailors, pirates and

lighting plants — but I simply had not known it when I saw them.

Think of the time it took me to identify Cleopatra, whom I'd made my chief companion that night.

Now she meant to me, besides what she was herself, a chance for getting into touch again with all that world. I got to thinking particularly of her friend, Magellan, and looking for him in the offing. But if he were about, I didn't recognize him; she spoke to nobody and seemed not to be expecting any one. She just kept on down the boulevard, minding her own business and glancing, as any girl would, into show windows. Then suddenly she stopped, entered a store and, during the six seconds she was in ahead of me, she did an expert disappearing piece. She was gone; absolutely!

I stood and waited; I wandered about but drew a total blank. I taxied down to the Blackstone where she said she was staying. I thought I shouldn't have believed that; yet it was true. There she was registered — at least somebody was registered, "Doris Wellington and maid, Denver."

By a little casual questioning, I made sure it was she; and by my soul I couldn't help liking

her the better for it. Not only was she stopping at our best, the Blackstone, but she had her own maid. "Doris Wellington and maid!"

She'd come in that morning from Denver; at least that was what she'd told the hotel. She was checking out to leave for New York by the Century that noon.

The hotel people, knowing me, naturally supposed me her friend. If she heard of my inquiry, I didn't know what she'd suppose, so I asked them not to mention it; and I beat it over to my bank to make ready for contingencies in case it proved true that she was on her way to New York by the Century.

Also I wanted to work up a little knowledge on the counterfeiting game; and I knew just the man to help me. Almost every big bank has its money crank. Old Wally Bailey holds the post at mine. His father founded the place and he has so much stock that, if the others won't make him vice-president, he'll have himself elected chief; so they all vote him vice, unanimously, at every election and put in half their thought between times at keeping him so busy at other ideas that he can't gum up the banking game by having any time for business.

They thank God over there whenever a well-

raised check drifts in; they rush it right around to Wally for it'll make him forget to insult customers for a whole day at a time. A good forgery sometimes saves the other officers from practically all argument with Wally for a week; while if they can just get a good counterfeiting job to occupy him, — well, they hardly dare pray for good luck like that.

Everything was humming so and borrowers were looking so relieved when I wandered in that I knew Wally was happily engaged; and soon somebody told me the good news. Fresh and unusually deceptive counterfeit bank notes were in circulation. Wally wasn't at his desk; he was in the Directors' Room which he had to himself, and all that the others had to do to keep him harmless was to send him the new Federal Reserve notes as they were pushed into the tellers' windows.

I found him with a catch of seven bad ones already this morning, and the banking day yet was young; five twenties, he had on the table before him, and two fifties. He greeted me with a happy glint in his eyes and shoved the secret service circular at me.

"Read that first" ; so I read.

"Twenty-dollar Federal Reserve Note on the

Federal Reserve Bank of New York; check letter 'A' plate No. 121; Carter Glass, Secretary of the Treasury; John Burke, Treasurer of the United States; portrait of Cleveland.

"This counterfeit is a steel-plate production, with the exception of numbering, and is a particularly close and excellent piece of work; even the scrollwork of the borders is uniform and good. The numbering is clean and clear, and appears to have been done serially, as no two notes yet received bear the same number. It is printed on special paper which when flat closely resembles the genuine, but is too brittle when creased.

"The face of the bill is unusually deceptive, the seal and numbering being particularly good; the faults in the portrait are actually microscopic, consisting in a slight broadening of portrait of Cleveland; the texture of the paper, however, together with the frequent bunching of the silk fiber inserted, should detect this counterfeit."

Wally ecstatically brandished one of his twenties beside one of the fifties before me.

"They haven't got out the circular on the fifty yet; they just 'phoned round about it this morning; and I've these two already. Made by the

same gang, you see. Same good seal and numbering; printed on the same paper; and also a steel-plate job. One of the old masters did that, Steve; spent weeks and weeks engraving that plate to make that reproduction. He's none of your modern, lazy, loafing photo-engravers running off notes on a hand press. That's a Janvier job, I know. A Chicago job, or a western job, anyway. I told Cantrell yesterday. But he still thinks it's a New York piece of work because the notes appeared down there first. The photo-engraved jobs are done down there; but not pure art like this, I told him. Broadway can't produce it; look here." And he picked up a couple of fifty-dollar Federal Reserve notes and went on with his talk.

Up to that moment, money had just been money to me; of course I'd noticed, especially since the Federal Reserve notes began coming out, we'd been developing different varieties; and I was aware that each style had figures of its own and that some one — usually a particularly rotten penman — took it upon himself to sign each issue; also I had observed, as a matter of course, that our money ran to pictures of presidents, each labelled so you'd know him, and on the other side they printed unlabelled but occa-

sionally exciting little scenes in green like the landing of Columbus or the wreck of the *Hesperus*. But the fine points of the art work had escaped me.

Now it appeared that the government hired expert engravers, not only for esthetic purposes but to make counterfeiting harder. Each issue was printed from steel plates, specially engraved and most particularly guarded. The paper also was specially made by secret process. Now, many years ago, occasionally a real artist and a patient and conscientious workman turned counterfeiter and cut a steel plate as good as the government's, and then, if he had a fair paper to print on and good ink, he gave the secret service a lot of trouble.

"Janvier, some of whose fine work was still in circulation when I started with the bank, was by all odds the best of these," Wally told me. "The secret service had got him about a year earlier; but his souvenirs were still coming in. His paper betrayed him; he couldn't make that; he had to use the best he could get and imitate the silk shred lines with colored ink; but his plates were almost perfect—even to the scroll work of the borders, which the government makes by special lathes; his seals and

numbers were perfect, even under the microscope; and his portraiture wonderful. He served ten years and then got out and put another series of gold notes in circulation, almost a thousand twenties in spite of being watched, before they got him again for ten more years, at the end of which he engraved the famous 'living Cleveland' plate from which the big counterfeit issue of 1912 was printed.

"He was watched, of course; so he couldn't do the printing; he had to give the plate to others who got better paper but not good enough; and the government got them all. That trial was famous, Stephen; you must have read about it."

I shook my head regretfully; I was interested in football in those days. So Wally told me:

"The government could not connect Janvier with the printing of the money but accused him of making the plates. Janvier offered no defence; he knew the secret service had him, but his attorneys put up the claim that the plates hadn't been counterfeited at all; they claimed that the printers used government plates which had been stolen!"

"Wait now!" I asked Wally, an old headline with a picture trickling through my mem-

ory along with Brickley's drop-kick scores. "I did read that. Janvier — if that was his name — jumped up in the witness stand at that and stopped the lawyer; he said he didn't mind going back to jail but he'd be damned if he'd see his own work classed with government plates. When he engraved a portrait of a president, he made him look as if he had once lived instead of —— " my memory gave way just then so Wally finished for me:

" Instead of like a death mask with the eyes pried open. That was Janvier; so they sent him back to the Federal prison where they kept him till two years ago, when he went blind; they operated on him but couldn't help him; and, considering him harmless, released him. But he must have got back his sight; anybody can see that. Why? For nine years what have we had in the way of counterfeiting? Clumsy, photo-engravers' jobs. Some ordinary, dull dub takes a camera and photographs a government bill, makes a half-tone and smears it with green ink and runs off a batch of bills so coarse and blurred, compared to engraving from a cut-steel plate, that a child can spot it. That's the modern way; easy enough, but they're lucky to get a thousand dollars into circulation be-

fore the secret service has them behind bars. But here comes back a regular 'old master,' I say; looks like he's a quarter million passed already; and he's Janvier, if he did lose his sight two years ago. Cantrell doesn't think so; he thinks it's a new hand."

"Who's Cantrell?" I asked.

"He's a secret service expert working here on this particular job."

It was about ten minutes after this, while I was still there, looking and listening, that a girl, who proved to be Wally's private secretary, broke the monotony of the clerks bringing in bad twenties and fifties.

"Hello, Miss Lane," said Wally. "What have you?"

"Doctor Lathrom, sir," reported Miss Lane, glancing at a card in her hand.

"Lathrom, the big eye surgeon, Steve," whispered Wally to me. "I've had Miss Lane calling on the eye people since yesterday noon. Go on, Miss Lane."

"He operated in August of last year on a short, stocky man, French or Austrian, of about sixty-five, he thought, who gave the name of Gans and who was almost totally blind from double cataract which had been previously op-

erated upon unsuccessfully. Doctor Lathrom restored his sight. I showed the doctor the picture of Janvier among six other pictures. He picked out Janvier's."

Wally struck his hands together. "I told Cantrell so. I told him it was another Janvier job; and that Janvier was in Chicago, too. He always cut his plates in Chicago. He couldn't work in the east."

"Does the doctor happen to remember anybody who might have been with this Gans?" I asked Miss Lane.

"Yes, sir. Not only Gans impressed the doctor, but his daughter, also. Since Gans was blind when Doctor Lathrom first saw him, she brought him to the doctor and made all the original arrangements. She was about twenty—he thinks; he remembers her for unusually attractive, of the active type. Dark hair; pert nose, he particularly recalled."

Wally wasn't paying any attention to this; he already had what he wanted and he was chatting on about the superior artistic inspiration of Chicago over Manhattan, even in counterfeiting.

"I told Cantrell it was a Chicago job on the plates, anyway; New York is a photo-engravers'

town; an artist like Janvier couldn't cut a plate like that within five hundred miles of Broadway. He'd smear it, if he tried to. Maybe they printed in the east; or made the paper, there; probably did."

He was waiting for the switchboard operator to get a connection with the secret service so he could scream his news at them.

If he had learned what he wanted, I had, too. It was perfectly plain to me, of course, that my partner Cleopatra — Doris Wellington, with maid, from Denver — was this daughter of Janvier, engraver of government notes without the government's coöperation. Her bit in the business was — to employ the convenient phrase of the Flamingo Feather — to blow out the bad dough, to shove "the queer."

You may gather that this realization did not come exactly as a shock to me; in fact, I felt rather a relief. Participation in that affair at the Flamingo Feather might imply so many customs worse than the mere personal issue of money that I drifted back to the Blackstone with cheer. What I'd found about her family certainly might have been a lot worse; yes, a whole lot. She'd stuck with her father, evidently. I liked that.

“Miss Wellington,” they called her at the hotel; that meant if Magellan or any other young man were about, he was keeping his distance. Miss Wellington proved to be in; she sent her maid down from her room to fetch her mail. The maid, who was as French-looking and demure as anybody’s, went back and forth from the elevator with eyes down. She mailed a letter, which I didn’t see, and obtained an envelope which bore the address of “The Antlers,” Colorado Springs.

A guest hailed her. “Felice” he called her in Londonish tone. Obviously he was an Englishman; you might put him down as a polo player off his pony and in morning attire. He had on one of those pearl-gray velours from “Scott’s,” hatters to H. M. the King, Piccadilly and Old Bond Street. A genuine, that was; no counterfeit. I knew a bit about hats. His cutaway and shoes were from Piccadilly, too — from tailor and booter to H. M. the King, also, or at least to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales. His manners were from the Mall. Apparently he was just arrived to meet Miss Wellington, having heard she’d dropped in from “The Springs.” But I knew him; he had been the mariner at the ball who’d impressed me as

being too light to class as Columbus. He was Magellan.

After he'd sent Felice up with the news he was here, he dallied before the elevators till Doris came down. She'd just left a mirror, evidently; smartness and style couldn't commence to suggest her. She was a stunner.

"George" she called him; and he called her "Doris"; and he led her into the main dining room for luncheon, taking a table at a window directly over the Avenue. I sat down alone a few tables away. It was nearly twelve; and they went at luncheon lightly, — cold lobster, mainly. I took the same and, to that extent, mingled. I didn't like George; not at all. I liked him even less than Magellan. He had a proprietorish way with him which was more irritating now that he was sober and out of costume.

She didn't exactly play up to him; she was polite, registering interest in what he said, watching the parade of motor cars and pedestrians below their window. Have I said it was a clear, chilly, pleasant winter day?

They never even so much as glanced idly toward the door through which Cantrell and his government men might come. They seemed to

think nothing of that at all, and if either of them gave me a thought, neither showed it. I heard Doris, in her clear, quick, amused voice, telling to George how she had discovered a counterfeit twenty in her change at Caldon's.

They finished and George paid the check. I finished and followed them into the lobby in time to see Felice meeting Miss Wellington with a receipted bill for their accommodations. Appeared also handbags and a couple of small semi-trunks, semi suit cases of the "week-end box" variety. Porters piled the luggage in front of a taxi.

It became evident that George, having joined the party, was going right along. He got into the taxi after Doris and Felice. "Century" he said to the driver.

The taxis are thick about the Blackstone just before train-time for the Century to New York. I got a man without the least difficulty. "Century, sir?" he said.

"If that car goes there," I told him. "If it doesn't, follow it."

XIII

AND LEARN THE SOOTHING EFFECTS OF FOND DU LAC TWINS.

IT went direct to the LaSalle Street station; and Doris and George and Felice were standing in the carriage court watching porters pick up their luggage, when I drove in.

They glanced at me; that was all. At least it was all I saw, and they went up to the train shed. I snatched a ticket and a coupon for an "upper" from the Pullman window and went through the cars. Doris and Felice had a compartment together about the middle of the train. George wasn't with them; he seemed to possess a section in a car near mine. He possessed also a large, piggy, Trafalgar-Square-looking portmanteau, yellow in color. I didn't know where he picked it up. I hadn't seen it at the Blackstone; probably he'd had it sent direct to the train.

I had lost a lot of my prejudice against George since I saw him parked in a separate

car from Doris. He looked at me, realized he had seen me several times recently and half nodded. I nodded and went on. When I glanced back, he was drifting rearward to the observation car where he sat down and picked up an afternoon paper. With as much casualness as I could manage, I dropped into a chair nearly opposite. The average Chicago to New York twenty-hour-train travel filled the other chairs with their varying degrees of self-consciousness and importance. There were the usual clothing merchants vociferous over discounts and braiding; there were a couple of advertising men lying — unless they were Sarazen and Johnny Black in disguise — about how they did the second nine at Skokie; there was a pleasant, middle-aged married couple, happy to all appearances; there was a mother with a son under her thumb; then there were half a dozen assorted males varying from the emphatic, self-made-man type to mild, chinless youths who might be either chorus men or bond salesmen. They always look alike to me.

And they always irritate me so that I did not notice that another man was beyond them until I observed that George was watching that far end of the car. He wasn't doing it conspicu-

ously; he was so subtle about it that if I had not been paying particular attention to him, I'd never have guessed anybody here was worrying him. But some one was — one of those bulldog-jaw, assertive sort of chaps that make you think right away of the reform candidate, and who gives you, at the same glance, the reason that reform administrations fail. Not a tactful face at all but highly determined. He was about thirty-five and was young for his type, I thought, until I considered that his type has to be younger sometime. Anyway, there he was, solid and belligerent, and with a copy of the *Iron Age* before his face.

I had to look at him eight or ten times before I became absolutely sure that he wasn't reading it but, in turn, was watching George when George was looking the other way.

So a man hunt — other than my own (if you called my operations a hunt) — was on aboard this train; and the stalking was in process before me.

It was a woman hunt, too; for of course Doris and Felice, forward, must be a part of the quarry; and as I reckoned their chances, I thought that never a bulldog-jawed hound had run a quarry into a more hopeless hollow log

than the one into which this man of the *Iron Age* had run my friends of the Flamingo Feather when he followed them on to the Century. He had them where and when he wanted them; they simply couldn't get away. Of course, I didn't know whether or not he was alone, in the sense whether he had other operatives with him; that made no difference; he had the clothing merchants and the golfers; the married pair, and mother and son; the assorted six with the bond salesmen,—if you cared to count them; he had a hundred with him whenever he wanted them. George and Doris, with Felice, had their wits and themselves; and, since there could be no possible doubt of the outcome of the stalking I was seeing, I couldn't help wanting them to give "Iron Age" a run before he got them.

There's something about authority—especially when it's so satisfied and certain and when it has all the odds on its side—which does that to one. Doris Wellington was not in my sight now; but when I thought of her as she was at the dance and as I had seen her walking down Michigan Avenue, I simply couldn't find any impulse to help old "Iron Age" over there snap his handcuffs upon her

and put that active, eager, pert little thing behind jail bars to be locked up until she was ten years older.

Now if "Iron Age" could specialize on George, I could control my emotions perfectly. I'd become somewhat more indulgent toward George, I've told you; yet I was not wild over him, at all. However, if "Iron Age" got George, by the same process he'd probably have Doris and maid too. So I was feeling almost friendly with George when I noticed he was standing up. He seemed absolutely casual about where he wanted to go. He wandered down nearer "Iron Age" first, yawned and turned a few pages of a *Harper's* on the desk there; that seemed to make him sleepier and he strolled forward out of the car.

I arose and drifted after him. Through two Pullmans he walked ahead of me wholly unaware, so far as I could guess, that I was behind him; then, in the vestibule of the third car — with doors closed before and behind us — he half-turned his head.

"Old dear, check him," he said to me. "Here; this door's jammed."

He opened the door before him as he spoke, he sidled through and, as he shut it, he dropped

something which engaged the bottom of the door. His words certainly were true, then; that door was jammed. I couldn't open it.

"Iron Age" could not budge it, when he replaced me at the knob. He must have been half a car behind me but I hadn't even suspected it till he joined me. Together we were the better part of three minutes at the door before we could enter the next car. George was then far forward.

I stopped in the washroom of that Pullman; for I wanted a minute or so alone to think over things since George had spoken to me. He had hailed me, you see, as a sort of comrade; he'd counted on me being with him.

Now I realized that after Doris had seen me at Caldon's and then they both had seen me at the Blackstone and here on the train, they must have attached some significance to me. And it was becoming plain to me that they made it a friendly significance; at least, they did not put me down among their pursuers. Probably Doris recognized me, not in the sense that she knew me for Steve Fanneal, but in the far more decoying sense that she realized I had been her partner at the Flamingo Feather and that, there-

fore, she could count on me when she needed help in this emergency.

I couldn't decide how "Iron Age" had marked me down. He went forward through a couple of cars but evidently lost George in some washroom or compartment and he decided to give up George for the present — there was no danger in that; we were skimming along about sixty-five miles the hour. Anyway, "Iron Age" paid me the compliment of returning to me in the Pullman smoking room and he plumped himself down, emphatically, and went about the job of clearing up any doubts of me.

"Now who are you?" he opened, with charming directness, a heavy hint of federal prison at Leavenworth lurking in his tone.

I gave him my business card without making any fuss and he looked me over and reached, with a now-I've-got-you gesture, for a copy of the *Chicago Tribune* which somebody had left on the leather seat.

He turned to the produce market page and questioned me temptingly:

"What do you do in the firm, Mr. Fanneal?"

"Oh, I buy a little," I admitted. "Overlook sales some."

“ You buy butter, eggs and cheeses, for instance? ”

“ Absolutely.”

“ Good. Now what was centralized Chicago yesterday? ” he sprung at me.

“ What score? ” I said; and he was sure I was stalling.

“ Ninety-three,” he mentioned.

“ Not quoted,” I told him.

“ Ninety-two, then! ” he dared me.

“ That was blob, too. But ninety was forty-seven and a half; eighty-nine opened at forty-five and lifted a half. Ninety-three in New York was fifty-five and was a half higher in Philadelphia. Butter to Chicago retailers, best (ninety-two to ninety-four) tubs, fifty-three, prints one and a half more, cartons yet a half higher. Good tubs —— ”

He held up a hand. I'd looked up butter, he figured; so he skipped down the column. “ Eggs? ” he asked me.

“ Extras, first or miscellaneous? ” I asked him. “ Checks or dirties? Forty-eight to forty-nine, and down to twenty-five.”

I shook him; but that bulldog jaw was not for nothing. He still held on. “ Cheese! ” he dared me.

“Flats?” I came back at him. “Twins? Daisies? Double Daisies? Longhorns or square prints? And Chicago? Or Fond du Lac? New York or Philadelphia? Flats at Fond du Lac opened twenty-six and three quarters; twins ——”

Never had I uttered anything more soothing; he had nothing whatever to say. And I’ll say this for him, he may have been stubborn and hard to convince, but once won over, he came all the way.

“Now exactly who are you?” I inquired, as he dropped the paper. “Private or government operative?”

He refrained from laying back his coat impressively to display a shining star. Apparently they do that only on the stage, or in the “sets” out in Los Angeles. Also he lacked the scintillating line of language I’d been led to expect by the Actors’ Equity. Somehow, since actually playing about with Jerry’s friends, I’ve lost my feeling for the crook drama.

“You may consider me government, if you prefer; and you may call me Dibley,” “Iron Age” confided indulgently and with complete trust. Hereafter, when any one questions me, I’ll remember the stupifying effect of cheese

quotations. I never saw anything lull a mind so. The trouble was — or perhaps it was an advantage — “Iron Age” now considered me not only harmless but probably childish.

“Have you any idea who that fellow was who wedged the door in front of you?” he asked.

“Did he wedge the door?” I asked, innocently. I wasn’t growing any keener about “Iron Age” Dibley, but I saw no harm in gratifying him.

“Didn’t you realize that? Well, he’s Stanley Sydenham — St. James Stanley, he’s sometimes called — the title tapper.”

“What?” I really didn’t know that.

“Land swindler. He’s out of Colorado State penitentiary last April after serving five years in the long house on his last irrigated-land transaction. Has he talked to you?”

“A few words,” I said truthfully.

“Probably he’ll talk to you again,” Dibley suggested, in a tone which hinted that he believed that George, having made a start with the simplest person on the train, would probably continue imposing on a good thing. “Also meet, if you can, Miss Doris Wellington and her maid in compartment E of car No. 424.

Then don't let any of them see you and me talking together."

"All right," I agreed willingly. "But what particularly do you suspect?"

"Exclude nothing," Dibley said and got up, the soothing effect of the double daisies and Fond du Lac twins still strong upon him.

I wandered forward to my seat when I discovered that, in my absence, I had acquired hand baggage; and I had sense enough not to question anybody about it or show surprise; I just accepted it; for there it was, — a neat, new, creditable-looking suit case under the forward seat in the position usually assigned to the baggage of the passenger of an upper berth; and it was, beyond any mistake of recognition, the neatest and newest of the suit cases which, at the Blackstone, had been the property of Doris Wellington.

I bent down, after loafing in the seat for a while, and I tried the locks in a careless sort of way, as though making sure I'd fastened my luggage. The bag was locked; and I shoved it farther under the seat and soon went forward.

I was willing to wager that "Iron Age" had no hint of that transfer of luggage to me; and this was no time to tell him about it. Besides,

I already was under government orders which I ought to be obeying. So I stepped forward to car No. 424 and to the door labeled E and I tapped upon it.

Felice opened it, like the alert little maid she was. As I confronted her, I tried again to place her in the Flamingo Feather; but I couldn't. She'd been one of the lighting plants, maybe.

Then I saw Cleopatra of the Flamingo Feather, Doris Wellington of Caldon's and the Blackstone and Michigan Boulevard, the daughter of Janvier, engraver of plates and herself shover of the queer. She was alone with her maid in the compartment.

"Can I come in?" I said, as she gazed up at me from her seat.

"Why, certainly; come right in," she said immediately, for all the world as though she was doing nothing there but waiting for me.

XIV

I TAKE GOVERNMENT ORDERS.

SHE nodded to Felice who admitted me and went out. Felice closed the door and, as I remained standing, Doris invited me to sit down.

“You remember me?” I asked her.

“Erasmus?” she said. “The thriller of Holbein? Certainly.”

I dropped upon the seat opposite her and, as I gazed at her, she gazed at me and continued, “Also we were both at Caldon’s, as well as at the Blackstone, weren’t we, Mr. Fanneal?”

“You not only remember me but you know me, then.”

“Certainly. Don’t you know me? Or what were you doing at the bank?”

“How’d you know I went to the bank?”

She smiled pleasantly — pleasantly as the Dickens. “Don’t you also know me?” she repeated.

"You're Janvier's daughter!" I blurted.

"Excellent!" she approved me and I felt like a boy in school.

She had been leaning slightly forward, not exactly tense, not at ease, either. Poised was the word for it; she'd been poised ever since I entered. Now she sat back more comfortably, being no longer in suspense about how much I knew.

"George was your friend Magellan?" I asked.

"That's what you named him."

"Felice also was present at the Feather?"

"She was the one who led you into the shed."

"I'm indebted," I acknowledged; and conversation languished.

For a second more I stared at her, as gay and piquant a little thing as ever a twenty-hour-train boasted; then, decidedly stumped as to my next step, I stared a while out the window.

Pleasant, Indiana winter scenery was skipping past us. There was clean, light snow on the fields through which stuck brown cornstalks, in those great, even patterns which so intriguingly alter as you dash past. There were frozen brooks with ice-encased willows bent over them; there were lots of agreeable looking

farmhouses and farm people Fording to and from little crossroads towns which looked idyllic, rather, whatever the facts may be.

"Has Sinclair Lewis spoiled this sort of landscape for you?" Doris asked me suddenly, as though reading my mind.

"I'm damned if he has for me!" I said sincerely.

She brought her small hands together. "Good! Nor has he for me. Poor fellow, if he really feels as he writes, what a world he lives in! I imagine him riding through lovely country like this with shades drawn or else emitting low, melancholy moans as each habitation heaves in sight. Now I like to think of Willa Cather's people when we're whistling through tank towns."

"So do I," I said, agreeing again. "They're there; they're hearing the whistle. You meet 'em. You ever been in a tank town?"

"When I was a child, I lived in one," she told me; "when father was serving his second term in the 'long house' at Leavenworth."

She might have said his second term in the House of Congress, from the way she spoke. No shame in it at all. Yet it brought me back to business. For a minute she had been just

a girl, mighty pretty and bright and pleasant and with tastes and distastes, both, which I liked.

She'd known about Erasmus and Holbein when we talked at the ball, you remember; now she knew about the same books I'd been reading. Likely she'd dipped into "This Freedom" too, in order to help herself decide whether, after marriage, she should drop business for the sake of the children or should keep right on to help husband.

Probably, in Chicago, she'd seen "Lightnin'" and "The Hairy Ape" and heard Galli-Curci and Chaliapin. Of course she had. A crook can't be crooking all the time; she's at the normal round most of it. But I'd never realized that till I took a little leisure to think it over. Now when you say a person's a counterfeiter, for instance, naturally you think of him or her, or both of them, crouching somewhere covertly together, printing off their money and then slipping out, with many glances around, to convert it into groceries and some of our ordinary authorized currency. But actually, very little of their time may be spent so. Most of it goes into just living, — maybe looking at movies, at dance halls or driving around;

or at the Art Institute, a good play or two, the opera, and maybe a lecture also, according to taste. I've heard of a gerver, lately, who even made it a habit to attend Sunday-evening club talks; and he was crazy over Burton Holmes.

So here was a girl like any other I knew, only quite some little quicker and pleasanter and better looking, with nothing really strange about her except her proclivity for passing out the bank notes father gave her. She knew it was wrong, of course, so very wrong that, for it, she ought to be shut in the "long house" at Leavenworth herself, serving her own long term.

But I had not the smallest impulse to put her there; quite on the contrary. In fact, I imagined, at that moment, that I heard somebody trying to listen at the door; and, thinking it was old "Iron Age," I felt myself going definitely to her side. Nobody was going to shut this girl up in prison for ten years. I was going to do something about her; but not that. I had no idea of shifting responsibility. Not at all; I was going to see to this business myself.

I got up and opened the door, while she

watched me. Nobody was there and I sat down again.

“ I’ve called on you by orders, I think you ought to know,” I told her.

“ Government orders? ” she said.

“ That’s it.”

She feigned a shudder, prettily. “ My soul! ” she said. “ What I’ve told you! Now you’ll arrest us all, I suppose! ”

I laughed, for I felt mighty good. There was no denying it; I felt as happy as ever I had in my life; happier on some counts; on others, of course, there was my knowledge of her character and the chances she was running. But the chances only made it more exciting for me to like her.

Obviously, I’d let her see she’d hooked me; she could feel me on the line. Yet she hadn’t me in the net — not quite.

“ I’d gladly arrest George,” I said. “ And lock him up for life.”

“ Why? ”

“ Because you care about him.”

“ Oh, do I? ”

And then, for no more reason than that — but you’d have understood it, had you heard her

voice — I felt better yet. I switched the subject back to business.

“ I’ve accumulated some hand baggage,” I mentioned.

“ Yes. Don’t you want it? ”

“ That part’s all right,” I said. “ But what to do with it? It’s not a gift, I take it.”

“ No.”

“ I see. You expect a search. Meanwhile I’m to have the bag and then give it back to you.”

She nodded; and there she proved she knew I was not in the net; for instead of asking anything final, one way or the other, she merely suggested, “ Think it over a while, won’t you? ”

I promised and got up; for she’d put in that a hint of dismissal. Then I remembered Dibley. After being in her compartment all this time, I had to bring to him something more tellable than our talk so far.

“ George is in on this game with you? ” I asked.

“ Why do you want to know? ”

“ I want to,” I said; and she told me, “ No; we’re just going on together.”

“ He has a lay of his own, then? ”

She avoided direct answer to that. "Well, he's still a young man," she said. "He hasn't retired; so naturally you'd suppose so, wouldn't you?"

"All right. Now as well as I can guess, old "Iron Age" — you know who I mean?"

She nodded.

I went on. "He's aboard because George is. He knows him; but he doesn't know you. I'm here to find out about you. What shall I tell him?"

"That we're getting off at Cleveland, please."

"What?" I said. "Are you?"

"Yes."

"And you want me to tell him that?"

"If you'll be so good."

I waited with my hand on the knob. "I'll see you again."

"Oh, please do!" she invited; and, feeling flushed and mighty good, I stepped into the corridor and drifted to the rear.

My new baggage was still under my seat in my Pullman but George was lost to sight. I wouldn't have put it past Dibley to have locked him up somewhere but that didn't seem to be the case when I encountered old "Iron Age" in the door of the smoking room of one

of the last Pullmans. Rather, he encountered me, reaching out and dragging me in behind the curtains.

"Now what have you found out?" he went after me with his delightful tact.

"She's a charming girl," I assured him. "I called at her compartment, as you suggested, and pretended we had mutual acquaintances and got away with it."

"You probably did not," said Dibley, to take me down from the hang-over of satisfaction which he detected on me.

"She let you in because you look easy. What did she tell you?"

"She's a low opinion of Sin Lewis."

"Who?" said Dibley.

"But she's keen on Miss Cather."

"Who?"

Sin Lewis, so put to him, seemed to suggest somebody, possibly one of similar name who was on Dib's list for rum-running or using the mails to defraud; but Cather wasn't on his cards at all.

"They write books," I explained. "We started talking about books." I thought it just as well to use the truth as long as possible.

"Books!" he jeered me.

I remained polite. "How would you have started?" I asked courteously. "Something like this? 'Good afternoon, Miss Wellington or whatever your real name is. I suspect you're a crook but for the moment don't place you. Now if you'll just tell me ——'"

"Drop it," said Dib, not agreeably.

I obliged.

"Now forget the start," he told me. "What did you get to?"

"Oh," I said. "I found one thing out you want to know. They're getting off at Cleveland."

"What makes you think so?"

"She told me so."

Old "Iron Age" gazed fixedly out of the window with the thought in his head (if his expression meant anything) of pulling the cord to stop the train if we happened to be passing an institution for the feeble-minded; but all was farm scenery, so I was safe.

"Thank you so much," he said to me feelingly. "It was always possible that they would try to escape at Cleveland; so it is of some advantage to know they're going on."

He released me after a few more words and I went to my section. I had his permission to

continue my acquaintance with Miss Wellington; but it was plain that he wasn't depending much on me. He was taking to telegrams, scratching off any number of yellow sheets to go from the next stop.

It reminded me that, in my preoccupation at keeping Doris in sight after I found she was leaving the city, I hadn't 'phoned my office. I had thought I'd wire; but now I decided not to.

I didn't want Dibley to have any chance to oversee the fact that this trip was a last inspiration of mine. I immersed myself, ostensibly, in cost estimates of our new can and bottling plant which I happened to have in my pocket, while I felt myself sinking deeper and deeper into this game I'd entered with Cleopatra Doris Janvier.

XV

IN WHICH I ASSIST A GET-AWAY.

SHE came into my car, blithe and smiling; at least she smiled at me. Every one looked up and every one, seeing that smile for me, put me down as lucky, I know. When she was past and out of the car, I could feel them gazing at me and wondering what I'd done to deserve such a smile.

She was a gay, delightful maid. Suppose that, not having had the advantage of acquaintance at the Flamingo Feather, I had met her in an ordinary way. I'd have been mad over that girl. Heaven salvage my soul, I was anyway.

She had a trick of playing up to me, which probably she used with everybody, but I never really saw it except with me. Anyway, she did it with me; and nobody else ever did. It was her trick of looking up quickly, when I was about to say something, and smiling in that pleasant way of hers (pleasant doesn't half do it; but it has to go at that) as if she was always

sure of something good every time I talked and as if she liked my line and me. When you're decidedly slow and ordinary, that makes quite a hit.

I sat figuring out her life. Put her down as twenty-two; then she was born during the year Janvier was out after his first term in the "long house" and while he was busy engraving the plates which sent him in again. Some one — she hadn't said who — took her into the country for ten years. Maybe she had a mother then; maybe not; her mother had dropped out somewhere. She was about twelve, then, when her father got out again and began his famous "living Cleveland" series of engravings.

Twelve, they say, is the child's most impressionable age; the parent or guardian molds the future then.

Now I knew nothing about the guardian, when the parent was in the "long house," but I had considerable information about father; and I could imagine him emerging from the pen all filled with eagerness to be back at his game of showing up the government engravers and of getting away with what he'd tried twice.

Wally Bailey had given me a graphic glimpse

of Janvier and his aim which, from one point of view, was actually a pursuit of perfection. What Wally suggested was that Janvier wanted, more than anything else, the satisfaction of doing the thing which had stumped him. That was what he wanted his sight back for, — to have a go at it again. And here he had it.

His daughter was helping him, naturally. She'd been born and bred to his business and surely had caught something of the spirit of her father who wouldn't give in, in spite of three terms, till he'd shown up the government.

I thought of what Jerry had told me of the Socratic genius of gervers and housemen; undoubtedly counterfeitters had their talent for dialectics too.

It might go something like this: the printing of a little extra money would not directly injure any individual. In fact, there was quite an argument whether it damaged people in general at all.

Many highly approved people were openly in favor of a freer issue of currency without bothering whether a gold or silver dollar was behind every bank note. Mr. Ford and Mr. Edison themselves had spoken for a scheme which, while not similar to Janvier's system,

yet had sent the good bankers into frightful attacks of financial hydrophobia.

Mightn't Janvier show plenty of authority to suggest that he wasn't in a bad business at all?

And suppose he compared it with other businesses; mine, for choice. What was the harm in shoving out a little informal currency compared with the damage in passing out drugged and adulterated food, which many a first family has done?

Then compare it with the coal brokerage business, from which many of my firmest friends are fat. What did they do for their profits, during a late, lamented shortage, but hold a few carloads of coal back from the market and away from people freezing for it so they could whoop the price a little more? Wouldn't everybody be a bit ahead if these people, who haven't the slightest fear of any "long house," had stayed out of the coal business and simply printed their own money for their profits and shoved it into circulation without harming anybody?

You see, as I thought it over, it didn't seem strange to me that Doris Wellington could smile and smile at me and not feel herself a villainess at all.

I wondered, from time to time, exactly what was in that nice, new suit case under my feet. A few hundred thousand in neat, new bills, I thought; or possibly plates. Maybe both.

That suit case kept bothering my bean-business conscience. It was decidedly one matter to like Doris Wellington and wish her to stay out of the clutches of old "Iron Age"; but it was something quite up another street to take charge of that handbag full of cash and plates and deliver them at destination for her. Obviously, this was what she meant me to do.

The day was waning; and all lights were on as we drew into Toledo, where old "Iron Age" sent his sheaf of telegrams over to Western Union. He received a couple of yellow envelopes too. I saw him strolling on the platform, reading enclosures and watching the doors of the train. He was developing a more menacing look.

Neither Doris nor George got off; Felice did, flirting expertly with one of the clothing merchants. "All aboard." We were going again. Cleveland, the next stop.

In the observation car, I found "Iron Age" ponderously on duty beside Doris who was reading *Harper's*. A good touch that, I

thought; there's something so disarming about *Harper's*. But it wasn't *Harper's* alone which made the effect. There was George a couple of seats away and he was reading the *Atlantic Monthly*, with Galsworthy's "Forsythe Saga" ready beside him for good measure, yet he didn't appear half so innocuous.

This was probably because he wasn't. The more I looked at George, the more I questioned his general character; but the more I gazed at Doris, the surer I was that—in all but one of the essential senses—she was a "good" girl. Looseness of living simply wasn't in her make-up.

You couldn't associate her with anything personally depraved or disagreeable. She'd no more steal a diamond ring, left in the ladies' wash room, than my mother, I felt certain. No; I was confident that her dereliction was highly specialized to the subject represented in that suit case of hers under my seat.

I wanted to talk to her about that and about other topics; but old "Iron Age" was asserting a priority claim just now.

He looked up at me and cut me dead, signifying of course that just now he and I weren't

to know each other. Doris nodded to me and I to her and I found a chair opposite.

Watching Dibley, I perceived that he was in the throes of opening a casual conversation. Of course Doris perceived it, too, and about a minute after I sat down, she dropped her *Harper's*.

Old "Iron Age" dove for it and restored it to her, pompously. She thanked him.

He said, "You're entirely welcome. You're going to New York?"

"Oh, no," Doris told him. "We're off at Cleveland."

"Iron Age" gave a glance at me, which eloquently said, "You see, you believed that. Now watch me."

I watched them both and George, too.

Evidently she'd told Dibley what she wished and she was at her *Harper's* again, as though she enjoyed it. George was at his *Atlantic* but he was poised; oh, decidedly poised.

"Iron Age" had two options, either to stay silent or start something crude like an arrest. But I doubted whether, in spite of his telegrams, he had enough evidence yet. So that was as far as he got in the light talk; and he'd jeered at me!

A waiter from the dining car appeared with

the usual word for six o'clock; and Doris got up.

"We're going in early," she volunteered to me, "since we're off at Cleveland."

This gave Dib another cue to rehearse his superior glance at me.

George followed her out of the car and Dibbey beckoned me over to him.

"Get her talking again," he told me. "Leave him to me."

When I found her seated alone at a table for two in the dining car, I interpreted Dib's orders liberally. She smiled at me and, when I asked, "How about my sitting here?" she said, "Oh, I'd like it!" So there I was across the table from her, ordering her supper and mine together.

There's something about that—the breaking of bread together, you know—which rather does more than you'd ever suspect unless you've tried it under conditions like mine. We not only broke bread; we broke a full portion of broiled white fish between us, another of cauliflower au gratin. I served those while she poured our two cups of orange pekoe from the same little pot and, for both of us, she mixed

salad dressing of her own in a bowl. The best dressing, by the way, I'd ever tasted.

She'd the prettiest hands I'd ever seen; and to have them doing things for me!

Occasionally, but with rapidly lessening frequency, I wondered about George,—why he didn't show up for supper and to what I'd left him with Dib. I ventured to ask Doris about him.

"Oh, he's not hungry," she assured me.

As I remembered him, he hadn't looked it; he'd only looked worried, whereas she didn't at all. She had true nerve, you see.

That dinner was so delightful that I longed to forget that she was playing for her liberty for the next ten years. I didn't want any other element in this but just her and me.

It ended with the check which she let me pay without silly argument; then we had to get up, and never more reluctant feet than mine moved from a dining car.

She went through the Pullmans in front of me; at each door, I came beside her, opened it; for a moment we were close. I hoped we were going to her compartment; but she surprised me in the vestibule of the third car rear from the diner.

No one was following just then; the doors on both sides were tightly shut.

She turned and looked up at me. "Which is it?" she asked, straight.

I knew what she meant; and at that second I suddenly decided. "I keep your suit case," I said.

"And you'll give it back to me?"

"Where will you want it?"

"New York. I'm off at Cleveland, as I said, but I'll come to New York later."

"I'll take it there for you," I said, and it was in the manner of an agreement, "if I possibly can; and I will give it to you under one condition." I waited.

"Nobody's listening," she urged me.

I told her. "It's this. I bring it to you, alone. I'll be alone; you must be. You must give me a chance then to talk to you."

"What about?"

"Can't you imagine?"

She gazed into my eyes without wavering. "I reckon! You'll give it back and ask me to give it back again to you—to destroy! All right! That's a go! I'll run that chance with you!"

She held out her hand and I grasped it and

she grasped mine, firmly and well. Somebody came through; just an ordinary passenger; but of course we dropped hands. When the doors were closed again, she went into her bag.

"Here's the key to the suit case," she offered it to me. "Sorry you won't find more for you to use inside; but there's a new toothbrush, anyway. Please have it!"

"You've another?" We were suddenly particular about little things with each other.

"There're more in Cleveland," she replied. "Where do you stop in New York?"

"The Belmont."

"I'll wire you my address."

"Where we'll meet?"

"That's it. Can you remember this?" she asked. "Don't put it down. "Take five from the first number, three from the second; one from the third. That much for numbers. For words read from Webster's Collegiate Dictionary — they're everywhere — first five up, second three down, third one up, and so on. A street named after a number will be spelled in syllables, taking the first in a word. You can find any syllable in the dictionary. Now tell me that."

I told it to her; and still we had an instant there alone.

"What do you know about happenings after the scatter from the Feather?" I said to her. "Did Vine get Christina?"

"No; she got away."

"He's in Chicago?"

"No; New York."

"What else do you know about him?"

She shook her head and opened the door toward her car. "Don't stay about now," she asked me; and she went into her compartment.

I should have known that she wouldn't talk over others' affairs. She'd said a good deal, all things considered. So Christina had escaped Keeban and he was back in New York, whence he had come. Probably, therefore, Jerry was in New York, too.

I asked myself what Doris's move to the east might have to do with them; how might she be mixed in?

Likely she was not mixed with them at all except when, more or less by chance, her group encountered one of their group in business. I could not possibly connect her with any scheme for murder. Christina, herself, had refused such a scheme; how much more surely

would Doris have kept free from anything like that!

With her key in my hand, I stood in the vestibule of the next car, daydreaming about her. The train was bounding along too beautifully, rushing us right into Cleveland. I wanted to see Doris again but she'd dismissed me; I could only endanger her now by hanging around.

When we stopped at Cleveland, at eighty-three, old "Iron Age" again was on the platform; and this time I tumbled off with him. I didn't plan anything quite so subtle as the succeeding event; really, I wasn't up to that at all. You see, what happened was this.

I'd reported to him, on parting from Doris after dinner, that I was sure they were leaving the train at Cleveland because she'd mentioned the matter, quite definitely, again. Of course Dibley only regarded me more in sorrow than otherwise; he was certain they were only playing me. So when I was on the platform with him, for my benefit he was a bit over-ostentatious in acting out his conviction that they were staying on the train. He had a new sheaf of messages to clutter up the telegraph office and Western Union had a boy burdened down with replies for him; so Doris and George, with Fe-

lice, were off and started away almost before "Iron Age" guessed it.

They were all without baggage, of course. After he saw them, Dibley got into action quickly. He yelled for guards to close in; he had out his gun. But they were down the stairs and I didn't need to grab that gun; so I didn't. Shots sounded below, however. I couldn't tell who fired them. I went down the stairs with Dibley and the rest of the drift from the platform; but my three friends had doubled, dodged and were away.

I waited as long as I dared; then I climbed and caught the train. Dibley didn't; but his orders overtook us. At Ashtabula, an hour or so east, they stopped us and officers came aboard to take off all baggage from compartment E, car No. 424, and also to capture George's large, piggy portmanteau. A special engine was about to start with all that for Cleveland.

During the stop, I rather expected a word or two might be said to me; but it became plain that Dibley's opinion of me continued true to form. Nobody bothered me; the train went on; my berth was made and I took that new suit case of Doris Janvier's behind the curtains.

XVI

I WALK INTO A PARLOR.

NATURALLY I debated about opening the bag. She'd given me the key; she had told me to use it, "please!" to find her new toothbrush. But I didn't open it for that. She had meant, I thought, that I should see what I was carrying. So at last I unlocked it and in the light of the little berth lamp I came upon her own intimate attire — a kimono, slippers and silk pajamas, ridiculous little lovely things; stockings, some more gossamer silk which probably was what Field's advertise as an "envelope", a mirror, a brush, a manicure set. There was the new toothbrush and "This Freedom", and below the book, tied together, a pair of steel plates. After looking so far, I felt no harm in gazing further, especially at these.

One was engraved to print ten-dollar National Bank Notes; the other was good — or bad — for the denomination of a hundred. I'm no judge of engraving on steel but they looked like excellent plates to me.

I rewrapped them and brigaded them with "This Freedom" and shoved them back in the suit case, which I locked. I went to use the toothbrush and also to think about those plates. "Well, wasn't that what you expected when you gave her your word?" I said to myself. The answer was that then I hadn't the plates in my hand and I was talking to Doris.

Going to bed, I lay awake, mulling over all manner of doubts having to do with Doris and Jerry and Keeban, Christina, and with me. I did some practical speculating, too; I wondered whether old "Iron Age", when he rendezvoused Doris's luggage returned from Ashtabula, was going to note the omission of kimono, slippers, silk pajamas, envelope, mirror, brush and "This Freedom" from the normal equipment of a young lady of the day; I wondered if, missing them, he might feel strange suspicions of me, which even the memory of my cheese quotations would not allay. But evidently he did not.

I got to sleep; when I awoke, Doris's suit case and those plates remained as they were. Nobody had disturbed them or me.

Breakfasting beside the Hudson, I propped before me the *New York Times*. It was inno-

cent of knowledge of minor doings in the west, such as a sudden getaway with shooting near the Lake Shore station at Cleveland, but it played a special from Chicago on the front page.

Janvier, the counterfeiter, had been taken with two of his new plates. The *Times* correspondent was feeling decidedly high up because of it. Trust New York to respond to word that the financial structure is just a bit more safe. Old Wally Bailey was gloriously bucked over the business too; he had himself interviewed in two places; first he certified that the plates, which had been captured, were the source of the highly deceptive and dangerous twenty and fifty-dollar false Federal Reserve notes recently put in circulation in great quantities; second he sounded the alarm that Janvier had completed, also, a couple of other plates, one for printing ten-dollar bills and one for striking off notes of one-hundred dollar denomination. The police had evidence that these plates existed but they had failed to find them.

For the best of reasons! I had them tied up with "This Freedom" underneath Doris's lingerie.

I carried her suit case myself across to the Belmont where I took it to my room and then,

after locking myself in, I gathered Janvier's plates from it and carried them, in my pocket, up to our bank where I had a safe deposit box and I put them away there. Much happier in my head, I wired Fanneal and Company, Chicago, not to expect me at the desk that morning and dropped into our New York branch and pretended that business had brought me on.

Beans and butter never struck me so dull as upon this morning; and the only thrill I could squeeze from Philadelphia double daisies and Fond du Lac twins was the second-hand memory of yesterday. I kept 'phoning the Belmont inquiring for telegrams; but nothing came in for me.

What was happening in Cleveland? I wondered. Was Doris going back to Chicago, now that her father was taken; or would she stick to her plan to come on?

Vine — Keeban — was here, she said; Christina was here. So, if Jerry was anywhere, probably he also was here; and, if any of his old habits clung to him, he'd know I'd arrived, too. There is a column printed every day, you know, giving the news of arrivals of out-of-town buyers in every line of trade. My name, with New York address, was in the papers that after-

noon. Jerry used to glance over the arrivals in our line.

I felt lonely as Crusoe that day, particularly when dinner time approached. I imagined I'd make myself better by drifting over to dine with some friends I'd met on Fifth. There was a daughter, there, about Doris's age and size; a popular girl, — a deb of a couple of years' standing. Sitting and smoking, I mean, rather.

I bored the poor dear. I always had, so why not now? She never flicked a stir in me. Not that she tried; she didn't. That was it. "Well, old Steve, we'll struggle through with the meal somehow!" Such was the sensation underlying the ennui; so, naturally, she made it mutual with me.

Thank God, she didn't try to mix salad dressing at the table; so I kept my memory clear.

That night, when I returned to the hotel, I had a wire filed at Buffalo; three words, no signature: "Seediness yonder thus."

You may suppose I had my Webster handy, and, counting my words up and down, made out "See you Thursday."

That was to-morrow; so I had to figure out, during the night, what I was to say. You see,

I had to bring her those plates and give them to her; but she had to give me a chance to argue her out of using them.

Lying in bed, many a good way of putting my point of view came to me. I got up several times and jotted them down; some I just talked over with myself. I made rather a night of it; never was more earnest over anything in my life. I looked to my talk with that girl as a sort of turning point in her life, and for me, if I could simply make her see matters straight. I was crazy over her; you've gathered that; and trusted her, too, or would trust her with anything but a counterfeit steel plate which her father had engraved. I figured I could make it so I could trust her with that, too.

About mid-morning, I got another wire; from Jersey City this: "Seven three chess omnivorous noose."

No signature again; but the system, which Doris taught me in that vestibule, gave me the place and the time. Up five from seven made twelve; down three from three, zero. Up five from chess, first syllable "cher" down three from omnivorous, "on"; up one from noose, "noon."

The telegram: " 120 Cheron (Street) Noon."

Cheron proved to be one of those streets, turned at several angles, down by Brooklyn Bridge.

I rehearsed all my talk, went to the vault and withdrew that pair of plates. I decided to make this meeting on foot, not in taxi, so I took the subway from Grand Central to the Bridge and emerged in that intriguing maze which radiates under the ramp of that old roadway suspended above East River.

Cheron Street showed itself on a corner full fifteen minutes before noon. It was a sunny bit of city that clear, winter day; it was one of those houses-and-stores streets with red-brick fronts, tall narrow windows and iron stairs and railings. Children romped about; hucksters were making sales to sets of the wisest buyers I ever saw. Price quotations floated to me and I wondered how they could work so close to cost.

I was trying to make the time pass more swiftly by turning attention to such trifles while I waited. For I would not call at No. 120 till noon.

Of course I'd located the number and looked it over several times. It was on one of the

regular red brick fronts which owned windows cleaner than most of its neighbors. Nice, old-fashioned curtains, stiffly starched, showed their white patterns. It seemed a precise and prim abode, not over-populated.

During the minutes I watched, men, women and children went in and out of the doors on each side, — practical looking men, who might be mechanics engaged in car repairs at a garage around the corner; in ways which I've mentioned, the women proved they were frugal housewives; the play of the children added to the decent domesticity of the street.

There was absolutely nothing sinister in sight and nothing and nobody menacing like the dyke-keeper in Klängenberg's delicatessen.

No one went in or out of Number 120; and I imagined it the abode of some aging, female relative of Doris; an aunt possibly, who might have been her guardian in some country town during Doris's childhood and who now had moved to the city and who probably took support from the proceeds of Janvier's plates but had nothing more to do with them.

When noon came, and Doris had not appeared, I realized that she must be waiting me within; and I went up and rang the bell.

An old woman admitted me, a nice-appearing, wrinkled and gray-haired thing.

"Come in," she said to me immediately, before I could ask for anyone. Plainly I had been expected; and she motioned me into the prim, red-plush parlor with an ancient piano and crayon enlargements on the wall; and also faded, plush hangings in the door.

These were particularly important furnishings; for it was when I was stepping between them that I was hit on the head; and not by that old woman nor by any infirm or failing person. The hit was wholly vigorous and expert; and right at the base of the back of my head.

Of course, I realized all this afterwards; at the time, I knew nothing. I was walking into that prim, red-plush parlor quite strong and happy; I passed the portières and instantaneously I was "out." I was also down but didn't know it; I went "out" while still on my feet; but naturally, when I found myself again, I was on the floor.

XVII

CHIEFLY DEVOTED TO A GAS CALLED KX.

A GOOD many persons of both sexes have put into writing the mental confusion usually concomitant to the process of "coming to." The descriptions which I've happened to read were done by good writers, certainly; but the writers don't impress me now as people who'd been personally hit on the head. At least, they lacked treatment under the hand of a pluperfect, post-graduate performer upon the *medulla oblongata*.

The trouble with those descriptions is that they are too advanced and intricate. The subject generally is seized with some figurative image, which is quite all right from my experience; but whereas others seem to have come to consciousness through flights of fancy similar to stanzas in "Spoon River Anthology" or Carl Sandberg's best, I woke up repeating to myself the simplest of verse. In fact:

“ Will you walk into my parlor?
Said the spider to the fly;
It’s the prettiest little parlor,
That ever you did spy.”

The psycho-analyst says that the subconscious, which is always with us, working, never is actually foolish; it is interpretive, if you have the insight to understand it. Well, this was my subconscious expression. It was interpretive, true enough.

Now the spider, in my complex, was not that old woman; Doris was doing the spider in my dream.

Upon becoming aware that, though I lay on the edge of a red-plush parlor, I was not physically a fly, I felt over myself to find what was missing.

There should be something hard and heavy and extremely important under my coat in my right inside pocket. That region was soft and pliable now. Plates were lacking; that was it, — nice, new, counterfeit plates which I’d procured from under Doris Janvier’s lingerie in that Pullman on the Century and which I’d put in my pocket to return to her here at Number 120 Cheron Street with an idea of evangelizing her out of using them.

Phrases and periods from that talk I'd prepared for her came into my mind and mixed into the parade of other ideas which followed the spider-and-fly act. They gave me a laugh, anyway.

I lay, looked and listened. After a few minutes, I sat up. Apparently I had the house to myself. Also I had my watch and other personal possessions, everything except those plates.

I took a chance on rising; and still nobody disturbed me. Possibly I might have poked all over that house but I felt no overmastering impulse. The door and that street, on the other side of the pane with these nice, prim, old-fashioned curtains, looked very good to me. I got out and shut the door behind me. Over by the bridge I found a patrolman and asked him to take me to the nearest police station.

That was the place where I sketched to interested ears the essentials of what I'd done since leaving Chicago. I gave them all, — how I'd suspected her before she took the train, how I helped her get away at Cleveland; how I'd carried on the plates and went to return them, trusting to the patent leather platitudes I'd prepared to turn her to the paths of rectitude.

I gave them, with that last particularly, the

laugh of their lives. They wanted to know if I actually expected she would meet me alone in a parlor to talk ethics with me.

They might have at least arrested me; but they didn't even do that. They did detail an officer to accompany me; but he felt himself distinctly as one charged to keep me from further harm. They rushed a squad over to Number 120 Cheron Street, of course, and surrounded the house properly before closing in. But nobody, not even the old woman, was there. The house was empty and so eminently proper to all appearances that, for a while, a theory prevailed that I had invented my whole story.

Then they began hearing from Dibley and confirmed the first part; about two days later, there was plenty of proof of the rest. The prints from those missing Janvier plates began making their *début* at the banks all over New York; Philadelphia reported a few; soon Boston was heard from.

They were so good that some of the experts at the banks wired Washington for a check on serial numbers before throwing Janvier's work out. Naturally, all this made me popular.

I didn't care about returning home; I didn't drop into our New York office. I stayed in my

room, mostly, where old "Iron Age" Dibley, among others, visited me.

He informed me that Doris and George and Felice all completed their get-away at Cleveland; and he didn't feel himself in the least to blame for that. No; he'd shifted any chagrin, which he might have felt, right on to me. Doris undoubtedly had come on afterwards, counting upon my chronic fatuity to respond to feeding by her telegrams; undoubtedly — to Dibley's mind — she personally arranged the *medulla oblongata* performance for me.

Of course, I'd felt that; but when old "Iron Age" got gloating over it, he cheered me into a question or two. Had she? Was I sure?

Well, I'd certainly indicated to the police that I was; and no one developed any further ideas upon the subject. Number 120 Cheron Street was deserted of Doris and her crowd as the Flamingo Feather after the ball. The issue of those new Janvier tens and hundreds seemed to shift to the south; Atlanta reported rather more than its share; Nashville and Memphis broke into the column of complaints and New Orleans was not overlooked.

I was about convinced that my friends of the Flamingo and Cheron Street had shifted base

again when I received, through the mails at the hotel, a note in Jerry's handwriting.

"Steve: Here's your chance," I read. "Get to T. M. Teverson at once and talk to him; or Sencort. Prevent any meeting in Sencort Directors' room. Make this absolutely sure. Examine pipe, particularly. J."

Jerry's writing and his manner with me, beyond doubt. He was still alive then and, if that postmark meant anything, he was in New York City at ten o'clock last night.

Of course, I'd never seen Keeban's writing. It might be identical with Jerry's; Keeban might try this with me for some scheme of his own. But I didn't think it. In the first place, this started with such an understanding of me.

"Steve: Here's your chance!"

Now Jerry, alive and looking on at me from somewhere in New York, naturally would start with that thought for me. He'd be feeling, from the first moment I'd stuck with him after he was accused and when I continued to stick through that affair of the Scofields', how I'd had a steady run of results against me. He'd have heard how, out of that Flamingo Feather ball, I'd gone deeper into disrepute; and he'd been thinking just that for me: "Here's your chance,

Steve." He meant, of course, my chance to rehabilitate my reputation somewhat.

"Get to T. M. Teverson at once!" That meant to get to the big man of the moment in New York. Officially, he was first vice-president of the Sencort Trust; but unofficially he was a sort of financial vice-regent of Europe for the time being. You see, that was the instant of the particular crisis in international affairs when the Sencort Trust took the load, and "carried" two of the major powers, along with seven or eight of the minors, for the sake of the peace of the world and to postpone, for a while anyway, the rush of the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse over the rest of Europe.

Teverson personally was packing tremendous responsibilities; and naturally every one, whose impulse in difficulty is to slip out from under and loot and destroy, was keen to take a pot shot at him.

Jerry's note must mean that he'd run on the trail of an especially capable plot which involved the employment of pipes running into the directors' room at the Sencort Trust. Suggestive, that mention of pipes; and he had emphasized the need to see Teverson at once.

I had the note just after breakfast; and the

Times this morning told that Lord Strathon, for England, and F. L. Géroud, for France, were arriving on the *Majestic* for immediate conference with the Sencort committee about loans and reparations. That meeting, this morning, undoubtedly was booked for the directors' room at the Sencort Trust, — a big bag, sure enough, for whoever was going gunning through the pipes this morning.

I'd no time to lose, so I rushed to Wall Street and up in the old Trust Building to Teverson's office. He was down meeting the *Majestic*, which was just docking; so I sent in my card to Sencort.

Now I knew the old man slightly; he had, among a thousand other flyers, his venture in beans, netting himself something too. Also, Fanneal and Company had supplied on some foreign-food contracts he'd financed; so I was sure he'd know my name.

He did; he sent out word he couldn't see me and told the girl to explain that he was expecting Lord Strathon and M. Géroud momentarily.

"Tell him that's why I have to see him now," I urged the girl.

She brought out word that the Sencort Trust

would not let the contracts on the supplies to be bought with proceeds of the new loans; and, if they did, I'd have to see him later.

I said to that girl, "You read the papers?"

Of course she did; and, when I asked, she granted that she'd seen considerable mention of me, recently.

"That's good," I said. "Will you ask Mr. Sencort if he has, too? And, if he has, assure him I've called on nothing connected with my usual business, but something else of direct importance to him."

"Rising out of your —" she hesitated and then said — "your counterfeiter's connection, Mr. Fanneal?"

"Rising from it," I told her, "but not stopping there. Now I leave it to you to get me in to see Mr. Sencort."

I saw, by this time, she was curious, if not a little impressed. It's queer how a short and conspicuously unsuccessful connection with crime produces an effect which a lifetime in a creditable business can not do, — at least not the bean business. That girl disappeared and when she was back again, it was to ask me into Mr. Sencort's office.

The old man was at his desk and alone, and I

saw at once that the girl had gone the distance for me with him; I had much to make good, so I went to it immediately.

“ I’ve come to ask you not to have any meetings in your directors’ room to-day.”

Of course he asked why; and I told him, “ I’ve word, which I feel sure is reliable, that there is a plot against your meeting.”

“ Hmm! ” said Sencort, evidently disappointed. “ Much obliged for your trouble.”

Plainly, he wasn’t interested.

I said, “ You’ll not meet in that room this morning? ”

He was looking at papers on his desk. “ Why not? I’ve had it examined. I’ve been warned before, Fanneal; so we’ve already taken precautions. These threats never amount to anything. Much obliged to you, however.”

“ You’ve examined the pipes in that room? ” I asked.

“ Pipes? ” he repeated. “ There’s always something about definiteness which claims the attention. He pressed a button on his desk.

The girl, who had got me in, reappeared. “ Ask Reed and Weston whether they’ve particularly examined the pipes in the directors’

room," he said; and when the girl was gone, he nodded to me. "Sit down, Fanneal."

Some one rang him on the 'phone, just then; and when he was through talking, the girl gave word: "Not particularly, Mr. Sencort. They're going over them now."

Again she left us alone.

"Rather rotten situation in Europe," I commented conversationally.

"Hmm," Sencort grunted, chewing his cigar, with as little interest in my reactions on the European trouble as in my warning to him. He gave me the impression that, having read about my performance with those counterfeit plates, he was willing to refresh his memory upon the sort of citizen who did that sort of thing.

His girl reentered and reported, "Mr. Teverson is here with Lord Strathon and M. Géroud, sir."

Sencort nodded. "Heard from Reed?"

"He's outside, sir."

"Send him in."

Reed proved to be a tall, keen-looking chap, evidently alert and undoubtedly dependable. He was one of the bank detectives, not in uniform.

"We've gone over the whole room again, sir;

and also the rooms adjoining. Everything is in order," he reported.

"Particularly the pipes?" Sencort asked.

"There's nothing wrong with the pipes, sir."

"Very well," Sencort dismissed him; and then he looked at me. "Much obliged, Fanneal," he thanked me again.

Of course, he was dismissing me, but I held my ground. "The warning which reached me, Mr. Sencort, did not advise mere examination of the room," I insisted. "It said to prevent its use. I must urge you, whatever you think, not to meet in that room."

"Fanneal, if I governed my movements according to cautions of well-meaning friends, I'd have put myself and family and friends in a steel safe thirty years ago. Reed says that room is clear; it is on the fifth floor, so attack from the street is impossible. Here's Teverson now."

Another hint for me, but I stuck, and just then Teverson came in to see what was so absorbing in here, and old Sencort, in explaining why he was preferring a chat with me to a conference with M. Géroud and Lord Strathon at that hour, of course dragged in the mad idea I'd brought along. But Teverson wasn't amused by it at all.

"Reed and Weston have both examined the

room," Sencort repeated, "and found all in order."

"All was in order over at Ed Costrelman's the other night, not only before but after the — the occurrence," Teverson mentioned in a thoughtful sort of brooding manner which sparked up old Sencort.

"What occurrence?" he came back loudly; of course Teverson had the door shut after him.

"Good Lord," said Teverson, "didn't you know that Ed Costrelman's dead?"

"Certainly," said Sencort. "I also know that his butler is dead and most of his party was sick but have recovered; from something wrong in the wine or vermuth. What has that to do with us? We're not serving liqueur at directors' meeting."

"It wasn't in the wine or vermuth," Teverson came back calmly. "It wasn't in the food either; everything they'd drunk or tasted has been analyzed. Everything, I tell you, was in order."

"What was it, then?" Sencort went at him, still with more impatience than interest. "Simultaneous, group indigestion?"

"A poison, a definite, lethal agent, reached Costrelman and the butler — Swan — in fatal

amount and the rest in less quantity. The post-mortem on Ed and Swan was completed this morning; there was definite, characteristic destruction of motor nerve centers."

"Characteristic of what?" This was old Sencort — yielding, pliable nature, he had, you see — at Teverson again.

"A cheerful little chemical composition which the infernal-machine and poison squad of the secret service call KX."

"What?"

"In your school days, how did you designate algebraically an unknown quantity?" Teverson asked old Sencort, evidently knowing that the way to handle the old boy was by going to the good old Socratic.

"By the later letters of the alphabet," Sencort grunted.

"That is the X in the name of this; it means they haven't an iota of information on one ingredient, except by its effect; by K, they mean they can halfway guess at the other; it seems to be the masterpiece of an Austrian chemist known as Stenewisc who hides himself most successfully somewhere on the East Side here. If he'd been born in the Borgias' time, he'd have been Lucretia's favorite; for his stuff killed Costrelman

and Swan and almost killed half a dozen more without giving the slightest warning till the physical seizure came, and without leaving an external trace."

"Poison to kill has to get into one," Sencort came back, not giving up yet. "If it wasn't in the food or in the drink, where was it?"

"What," returned Teverson, sticking to the Socratic, "goes into one's body beside food and drink?"

"Air's all I can think of."

"All I can," Teverson admitted. "And, with that in mind, I believe I'll have a look around our directors' room myself, if you'll hold up our meeting for a few minutes."

"Damn foolishness," acceded Sencort graciously.

"Pipes were what I was particularly warned against," I said to Teverson.

"Come along," he invited me; so I went with him to the fifth floor, passed Weston and Reed on guard outside to see that nobody carted in time bombs since they'd last reported the room clear, and we stepped into the regular, long-tabled, black-walnut panelled mausoleum sort of room which directors picked for their deliberations a generation or so ago.

There it was, with two windows to the street and both closed; it was winter, you see, and Sencort wasn't the only near octogenarian to rally round that walnut. It had electric lights and nothing else but a steam radiator, carpet and chairs and five old etchings on the walls. Everything was clear; nothing was wrong in the drawers or under the tables or chairs or even under the carpet. Reed had carefully tested the radiators and steam pipes. They were absolutely in order.

But I kept poking about the room and, behind an etching, I found the capped head of an old gas pipe which evidently brought illuminating gas to the room in the days before electric lighting.

It was capped, I say, and looked quite all right, but I happened to put my fingers behind the cap. Then I called Teverson; and he felt, and called Reed.

"What do you think of *that*?" he asked.

That was a slot — rather a series of slots — cut through the pipe behind the cap on the right wall. You couldn't see them from the front; you hardly could see them when you pressed cheek to the wall but you could feel them top, bottom and sides of the pipe cut through, leav-

ing just enough metal to hold the cap in place; and freshly cut; for the edges were sharp to your fingers and shining to your eyes. But of course every scrap and shaving of the metal had been cleaned away. The pipe behind the cap back of an etching on the opposite wall was exactly like this.

“It was to come that way, I guess,” I said carefully to Teverson.

“Was?” he repeated as carefully. “What makes you think it isn’t yet to come? Not in the middle of our meeting now, but to whoever is here, which means you and me.” But he did not move away; instead, he walked to the window and stood there looking down. I glanced down too and into Wall Street and got a glimpse of that part which seemed particularly to bear a message for us this morning—that strip between Morgan’s offices and the sub-treasury where people were peacefully passing and feeling absolutely secure that summer noon, not so long ago, when without warning at all that infernal no-one-yet-knows-what went off and did what nobody about Wall Street will ever forget.

Of course, what had strewed the street had been gathered up and the pavement repaired and flushed and swept and the buildings restored

long ago; yet this neighborhood wasn't precisely the best spot to disregard a threat of terrorism, — especially when you've found ancestral gas pipes freshly chiselled for no use you wish to put them to.

"We've expected trouble from radicals about this stage in our foreign financing, Fanneal," Teverson said to me. "We've guarded Géroud and Strathon from the minute they passed quarantine; we've double-guarded these premises with special men who are watching every stranger who comes in to-day; we've taken every precaution — or thought we had. That's why Sencort was so sure nothing could happen."

He stepped nearer to the window and I realized that he was not standing there merely to think, but he was intentionally showing himself to convince any watcher that the room was occupied. He turned about and went on, "No one knows where the other ends of these pipes are now; of course they haven't been used for decades. They might stop anywhere or they might have been led on indefinitely. If what killed Costrelman came through the air — and it seems certain it did — and if those pipes are conveyors for more of it, they could have pumped it in and nobody suspected till some-

body fell over; it might be coming now on us. Do you feel any movement of air from that pipe?"

"I can't be sure," I said.

"Come out now," said Teverson, pulling at me absolutely unnecessarily; he didn't have to put up any argument. "I may be a damn fool, as Sencort suggests, but then I've rather a longer life expectancy — away from slotted gas pipes — than he. Besides, I'm beginning to feel some of this is personal against me. I was invited to Costrelman's dinner and was expected, though I didn't get there. . . . Weston, get help at once and try to cover the places where these pipes may run to; they may be entirely outside the building, of course. Jump! Reed, post men here to see no one uses this room or room next to it to-day. Leave the electric lights burning as if the room was being used and send some one, on the run, to that animal store the other side of Broadway in a cellar, Thames Street, I think, and buy four or five guinea pigs; if he gets back with them in fifteen minutes, cover your head, hold your breath, and put them inside this door; close it. If he doesn't get back that soon, don't even go near the door. Wait

here, Fanneal." He left me in an office near by and himself rushed away.

"Now you tell me," he went at me three minutes later, "how much you know about this?"

XVIII

DORIS APPEARS AND VANISHES.

I WAS a changed man, as you may imagine. Yesterday and up to this minute of this morning, I was the laugh of the locality. "F. P. A." had put in a little paragraph about me; the librettists of the running revues also had tamped in a line or two of appropriate personal reference to the Chicago vendor of beans, with two nice, new money plates packed in his jeans.

It was music to me to hear any one address me as Teverson was doing.

"You know nearly all that I do," I told him. "Maybe you've heard I've been in a little mix-up with counterfeiterers and others recently. I got my tip out of that."

"Who sent the tip?"

I shook my head; it was hopeless to go into the question of Jerry with him; and Teverson was not inclined to waste time impractically.

"Pipes!" he repeated. "They were going to use the pipes; that's all you knew of their method?"

"That's all."

"What do you want to do now?" he asked me, almost deferentially. "Stay here?"

"I'd like to see this through, of course," I said. "I'd like to know what happens to those guinea pigs."

"Whatever you like," he answered, and shook hands with me. I could see he was getting uneasy about Strathon and G  roud. He went out and I, having nothing to do but wait, wandered in the hall.

A door opened at the rear and showed an enclosed stairway lit by yellow electricity; a girl had come up the stairs and now was standing in the dimness of the hall.

During the second she showed herself in the lighted doorway, before the door closed again, I had a glimpse of her outline. She was little and trim; like Doris, I thought.

I stepped down by her and she went to the side of the hall and stood. Then I had the instinct to seize her; and there, in the quarter-light, I saw what I was feeling with my hands. She was Doris Janvier.

With the realization, my head seemed to hurt where I'd been hit; but my fingers held firm to her, giving her no chance to get away.

"What are you doing here?" I challenged.

She was quick! "I came up to see Mr. Teverson!" she said to me. "They wouldn't let me see him downstairs. I heard he was up here!"

I half shook her. "You came up to see if they were meeting in the directors' room. You're the "wire" inside to-day! You came to see if everybody was placed! Well, nobody'll be in that room but guinea pigs this morning. I don't mind telling you, for you'll not get back to tell them."

"Oh!" she said. That was all, just then. "Oh!"

I kept hold of her, not knowing what else to do or say.

"Where are they?" I asked her, after a half-minute.

"Who?"

"Your crowd."

She waited half a minute herself and then said, "I don't know."

"Never mind; we'll find them. We're following your pipes," I assured her. I dragged her toward the front of the hall and had a better look at her.

"They're not my pipes!" she denied.

"That's true," I admitted. "You found them

in place; all you had to do was to make new openings."

"Steve!" she said to me.

"Don't try it," I asked her.

I could see her face now, — her lips straight and thin, her eyes fixed on me, her forehead damp with those tiny drops of perspiration which you know are cold. She was wearing, not the same suit she'd had on the train; but one as smart, with fur collar and cuffs. She was the same neat little thing who had so completely fooled me; but she wouldn't again.

"Steve!" she repeated my name. "I came here to find Mr. Teverson to warn him. Since he's been warned, I don't care."

"I do!" I retorted and held her. She'd spoken as if I'd let her walk away.

Reed was back at the door of the directors' room with little furry things in his hands. Somebody opened the door, he entered and came out quickly without the guinea pigs. He saw me and stepped up.

"Who's this, Mr. Fanneal?" he asked me, respectfully enough, gazing at Doris.

I didn't reply and he answered himself. "Oh, it's her who was asking for Mr. Teverson downstairs."

"I'll see to her," I said to Reed, and I led her into a room which I found empty.

"Now you'd better tell me all you know," I advised her.

"What'll you do, if I don't?"

"You'll not get out of this!" I promised her.
"Not out of this!"

Nothing yet had really happened in "this"; we'd discovered nothing actual but those slotted pipes. Not even the guinea pigs had been killed yet; but the certainty of the plot, which had convinced Teverson too, turned me sick when I thought of it. And this girl, whom I held, was in the scheme.

True, she had stopped, on a lower floor, to inquire for Teverson; but that proved nothing in her favor. I thought how I'd trusted her before and how I'd been hit on the back of the head when I went to that meeting place where I was to have my chance to argue with her, alone.

I held to her; and she gazed at me and I felt her breathing slowly and deeply. The little clock on the desk near us turned to eleven; and we both heard steps and talk in the hall.

"What are they doing?" she asked me.

I opened our door; and we both saw two men, whose figures looked like Weston and Reed.

They had hooded affairs, of gas-mask pattern over their heads, and they were at the door of the directors' room.

"Don't go in!" Doris cried to them. "No mask's any good! Don't let them in!" she cried to me.

Apparently they did not hear and Doris jerked toward them. I held her and shoved her back of me. "Don't go in, Reed!" I called and at that moment, though I did not know it, I must have let Doris go.

I was watching the men and calling to them again; they had the door open a little; now they dropped back, but they could look in.

"They're dead," said Reed's voice.

"Sure," said the other. Then I missed Doris; and when I saw her, she was at the top of the stairs where she had first appeared. She had the door open and she was standing in it, looking back; then she slammed it. I was after her, but she had too good a lead. On the third floor, she entered the Sencort offices and left me on the back stairs with a bolted door between us.

I beat upon it and shouted and then realized, too late, that my best chance was to go to the ground and head her off. Of course I never headed her; she was gone.

When I returned upstairs, Reed had ventilated the directors' room by opening the windows from the outside ledge. He had taken out the four guinea pigs he had left penned on the top of the directors' table. They were all dead without visible hurt or reason.

Teverson came out of his conference, which was being held on the third floor; and he turned the limp guinea pigs over thoughtfully.

"There's only one reason those aren't Strathon and Géroud and Sencort and me, Fanneal," he said, looking at me. "You want to do one more big thing for us and against — them?" He moved his head toward the wall; I knew whom he meant.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Keep this all quiet. It's asking something, I know."

I guess I got red at that. He meant I'd played rather prominently as a goat and it was something to ask me to conceal the one thing I'd put through.

"It's the only thing to do," I agreed.

He gave me his hand again. "We'll all know," he said.

"How about the men you have tracing the pipes?" I asked.

“Nothing from them yet.”

And there was nothing until a good deal later, when they found that those old gas pipes had been extended into an unused basement room in the building to the left. When they entered this room, they found proof that recently it had been occupied; men had been doing things there with reference to the end of that extended gas pipe, but everybody had got away.

I kept quiet, of course; the Sencort people hushed their clerks. Lord Strathon, for England, and M. Géroud, for France, met with Sencort and Teverson and made their agreements as everybody read. Nobody read of that near success at gassing them dead as those guinea pigs which had been penned on their table.

Nobody knew, but the Sencort people and I and those who had slotted the pipes and killed the four guinea pigs from that next-door basement room.

“Get out of New York, Steve! Stay away!” said another note to me in Jerry’s handwriting.

It arrived the second day after the gassing of the guinea pigs and I was thinking it over, when walking on Park Avenue and, being far from my hotel, I gave in to a taxi driver who offered his cab at the curb.

"Belmont!" I told him; and he started in the right direction; then he swung to the east and was over Third Avenue. He was up an alley while I was rapping at his window.

I realized then and opened the door and jumped out while the cab was still moving; but I was near his destination. A gat was at my midriff before I'd stopped slipping in the muck underfoot; and as I looked into the faces of the gents surrounding me, I understood that, upon the rack of their club, my number to-day had arrived at the top.

XIX

I HEAR OF THE GLASS ROOM.

THEY were not masked; it was daylight. The hour was late in the afternoon, to be sure; but I saw them plainly as they made no attempt at concealment. And I could guess at the significance of this. They showed themselves, without care, for they felt absolutely sure I would never have a chance to give evidence against them.

I used to wonder why a man doesn't put up a fight, in spite of having a gun shoved against him, when he knows he's in for the worst possible after he surrenders to such a circle as met me. The fact is, at the moment, the gun at your belt is wholly convincing; you aren't competent to imagine incidents subsequent to the occasion of its going off. So you don't force the occasion.

"Step in there," somebody said to me; and I stepped. "There" was a door in the rear of a building; it led into an empty room and to another door indicated as my destination.

Here was a closet without further portal and

without window; its light came through the door by which I entered; and it was so dark that, when I was thrust in and the door slammed and bolted, I supposed myself alone.

I stood still, with my hand on the door panel, while the after-images of light faded from my retinas and became replaced by the blackness of pitch dark. I indulged myself — or attempted to — in some of that logic said by Jerry, a little time ago, to be the present prerogative of gervers, guns and gorillas, and in which I felt certain that pumpers of poison gas would not be found lacking.

The last step on their ladder of reason was not difficult for my mind to ascend. I had spoiled their great scheme at the Sencort Trust; therefore now I was to be punished. Perhaps, in contemplation of the certainty of this, I should have been satisfied; but I had to go about the gathering up of earlier starts and sequences.

I felt myself caught in a continuity, frequently suggested but not finally convincing, until suddenly that gat at my stomach summed up everything for me. "Here you are!" it spoke. "You've gone this way and that; but now you've come to it!"

I got to thinking what Jerry told me of "his

friend " — Keeban, his strange, sinister twin — "sitting in with destiny" by knowing, in advance, what he was going to do to others. I'd thought of him sitting in with destiny on Dorothy Crewe and old Win Scofield and on Jerry himself; but I hadn't thought of him sitting in with destiny on me. Stupid, now that I came to see it; for of course I was in his calculations all along; he'd used me, as long as I proved profitable and now that I'd failed him, he'd finish me.

For I knew than that Keeban had me. He had not shown himself in that circle of reception in the alley. No; every face there had been unknown to me, unless one was the dyke-keeper of Klängenbergs's delicatessen. They were normal-appearing, good-looking youths who made the majority in that circle.

I'd often noticed — haven't you — how indistinguishable our felons are from the philanthropists of the day. Mix up the captions — as the best of newspapers sometimes do — accompanying the illustrated page pictures of the gentry who last night did "Fanny's First Play" for the Presbyterian Home and the guests and ladies who last night failed to start their Fiat promptly after they had it all filled from the ring and wrist-watch trays in Caldon's windows, and

who could be sure which words went with which faces?

Admit the truth; you'd hire most murderers on sight. Others do; why not you? They look normal.

Nero was normal, H. G. Wells says; he had a little peculiarity, to be sure, but that was merely incidental to his position, not to his nature. He was so placed, you see, that the ideas, which remain mere passing black thoughts and impulses with the rest of us, could without any trouble or personal effort at all become actual deeds with him. That was the secret of Nero. Before a man condemns Nero as being of a separate species from himself, he should examine very carefully his own secret thoughts. This is Wells's own advice and monition.

It occurred to me there in the dark in reference to the normals on the other side of the door. They looked all right; but they showed signs of an education decidedly deficient on inhibitions, and altogether too prodigal at translating dark thoughts and impulses into action.

I wondered about Jerry and how much he might be knowing of my present position; twice, recently, you remember, I'd had word from him. I did the drowning-man acts, —

both of them; I caught at the straw that somehow he might save me, and I reviewed, if not my entire life, yet several significant epochs of it; and I got to thinking about Doris.

She was in with the worst, I was now sure; she not only had had me hit on the head, when I came to see her, but she'd worked in that scheme to gas Sencort and his guests. I kept thinking about her and the dances we'd had together at the Flamingo Feather and our dinner on the train when I'd had the best time ever in my life.

Meanwhile I was listening and I began to realize that there was a soft, regular sound separate from and nearer than those which reached me through the door. It was the zephyr of breath. Some one was in the closet with me.

"Hello," I whispered. "Who's here?"

A hand touched my side and I seized it, — a small, firm hand mighty like Doris's.

"Hello; who're you?" I asked.

"Hello, Steve," she said. Doris! By Christopher, Doris!

"Anybody else in here?" I asked. That sounds stupider now than at the time; for after this, I was ready for anything.

"No," she said.

"What 're you doing here?" I asked her; and she said, "What d' you suppose?"

That was it; what did I suppose? Here she was with me. I was there because I'd run down and showed Teverson those slotted pipes and spoiled the best of Keeban's schemes. Now why should she be here except for the same reason?

"They saw you down on Wall Street," I said.

"Yes."

"I see," I whispered.

"Do you?" she asked me.

I bent at the same time that my hands, which had been holding hers, felt up her arms, over her shoulders and located her cheeks. I held her between my hands and, bending, kissed her. On the lips, it was; I found them fair. She helped, perhaps, a little.

"How long you been here," I asked her, my lips burning like flame; and how I liked it!

"What time is it?" she asked.

"'Bout five when they shoved me in."

"I came at three."

I kissed her again at that; I was still bending and had her cheeks between my hands.

"How'd they get you? You take a cab?"

"That's how they got you?"

“Me,” I said. “But you — you weren’t so easy, were you?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” she temporized.

Queer — wasn’t that — how she wanted to show consideration for me? “I should have told you,” she blamed herself, “that they’d be watching the Sencort building, and when they bumped off just guinea pigs, they’d lay for who fooled ’em.”

“I had a tip to skip out,” I said. “But I didn’t start in time. Where did they get you?”

Now she told me, “They took me out of my room by the back way.”

I held to her but differently — oh, entirely differently — from my hold of her in that Sencort room. For I knew not only that she’d not been in that scheme, not only that she’d gone there to warn Teverson, as she said, but also I knew she’d nothing to do with that blow on my *medulla oblongata* at Cheron Street.

“Vine’s doing this, I suppose,” I whispered.

“Yes.”

“He sent me both those telegrams?”

“No; only the second; I came on, as I wired you. He grabbed me when I arrived and threw you the second wire. I didn’t see the street till he was through with you.”

“What’d he do to you?”

“Me? Oh, he was all right about me, then.”

“He didn’t hurt you at all?”

She knew what I meant and replied, “He did not! Christina saw to that.”

“Oh, she’s back with him?”

“Umhm. That’s why she saw to it.”

“All right,” I said; and kept hold of her. My property, she was; mine.

“You’re forgiving me?” I said.

“For what?”

“Down on Wall Street; and what I did after I’d been hit.”

“Oh, that was you, Steve, just you.”

Pretty soon, then, I asked her, “What’s Vine’s idea for us now?”

You’d have thought I would have asked that the first thing. But question any doctor; inquire how patients act when they know there’s no hope for them. Do they say right away, “What is it, doctor?” They do not; they say, “Lovely weather; and what a view from this window!”

Doris was like a doctor in that, when I got around to asking her, she did her stalling, too; but finally she told me, “Well, I guess for us it’s the ‘glass room’.”

XX

DORIS AND I ARE TAKEN TO IT.

WHEN she said "for us," I got another thrill there in the dark, and right away I got quite the opposite when she said "the glass room."

I had not heard of it before. No; that was the *première* for the phrase with me; but it was one of those phrases which carry their own connotation; and this was decidedly an uncomfortable one.

"What's the 'glass room'?" I asked her.

"Never mind," she said, and it was like a mother to a child. You've heard something of the sort when a visitor let slip, before the children, a remark about the feature atrocity in the morning paper. "Never mind," Doris said again to me.

"Well, I'm grown," I said. "And since I'm apparently a candidate for it, why not tell me — unless you prefer to have it come as a complete surprise to me?"

"Don't!" she asked me; and we stood in silence in the dark.

"You've explored the cavern, I suppose between three and five," I said, starting up the small talk again.

"Yes."

"It runs to solid walls, I take it?"

"Very solid."

"Nothing like a trap door in the floor, by any chance?"

"Not by any."

"Now a noise would probably be one of the worst advised projects possible, don't you think?"

"It wouldn't change the end at all," Doris said, "and would only put us worse off now. They'd tie and gag us — or else let us yell for their amusement."

"Of course some one's just outside."

"Of course."

We were silent again and I listened. "Yet we don't know. I hear nobody now."

I threw my weight against the panels, bracing my feet as firmly as I could. The wood creaked but did not break. Hearing some one at the other side, I relaxed and the door opened.

"Who's so crazy to come out?" one of the normals said to me. "Come along." He punched me with his pistol. I came.

He slammed the door on Doris and threw over the bolt. Without another word to me, but guiding me by punches of his automatic against my side, he herded me into another closet, equipped with a heavy door. Here I was alone.

Standing alone in the dark, I wondered why they put me in with Doris, first; and I wondered now that it was too late to ask her again, exactly what "the glass room" was. Then my two perplexities partly answered each other.

She, having been caught doing a "double cross" on her crowd, knew what was going to happen to her; and they put me with her so she would tell me and so, while I waited, I would have the benefit of my own anticipations of the "glass room."

Suggestive sort of name, wasn't it?

I stood in that closet, or sat on the floor, for three hours. It turned out to be not yet nine when the normals removed me. Of course it seemed several times longer; many more than three hours' thoughts went through my head.

"Ready for the 'glass room' now?" one of the normals said to me.

I said something in the manner of "Go ahead."

"Come along then," he said; and prodded

me as before. But this time, as they were taking me out, they did a little more. They tied my hands and stuffed my mouth full of cotton and bound it in. After they had prodded me into their car, they threw a rope around my feet and pulled it tight.

I did not see Doris at all, then. I had no idea whether they already had attended to her, or whether she was next or whether they were leaving her behind.

In the car, the curtains were down; I couldn't see out, yet I had some idea of where we were going. First we headed east, running with the long blocks, then we swung to the right and went with the short squares, crossing many streets and stopping many times at traffic signals.

That was one of the queerest features of the ride, to feel that the car, carrying me bound and gagged to the glass room, was halting, with the most punctilious, to obey the street regulations.

The three normals said little to me and not much more to each other. Altogether it was a quiet ride and, in itself, uneventful. We turned east again after our run south and I knew that we were in that bulge of the city below the numbered streets.

We went on to a bridge, — the Williamsburg

bridge, I thought; and when we were off it, and had taken a couple of turns, I lost all reckoning. I wasn't particularly up on Long Island City and Brooklyn.

When we reached our terminus, they threw the noose from my feet and prodded me to precede them from the car. Others were there waiting, — other normals, I mean. I saw nobody else in my fix. We were between two large, dark buildings which seemed to compose a factory of some sort. I saw corrugated, sheet-steel shutters covering the windows, not only next to the ground but upon the upper floors. The factory unit to the right communicated with the one to the left by a bridge-of-sighs effect about twenty feet from the ground. The whole place had a shut and deserted look which was intensified by the distance of the nearest night lamps.

There was a dark, overcast sky. I remember glancing up to get a glimpse of a star or so, if I could; but nothing like one was showing. So I took a long deep breath of the outside air, as the next best thing to do, before following some of the normals, and preceding others, into an aperture which developed a door somewhat farther along.

We were in a large, wide space of a character familiar to me; it was bare of furniture, except for many long, low tables, several chairs and stools and, here and there, a desk. Chutes slanted down upon the tables. These were for the delivery of goods in the days when the factory was working; here the shipments had been made up and dispatched.

I saw all this in the yellow glow from a couple of old electric bulbs in fixtures on the sides of the great supporting columns which stood in rows through the room. Although these lights proved that current was coming into the building, the state of this shipping floor was conclusive that the factory was shut down. It was an easy trick, I knew, for one of the normals to "cut in" the current which had been turned off by the company.

Several empty boxes, ready for goods which never slid down the chutes, were piled up on one side and I passed near enough to read the stencilling on their ends.

"Stamby-Temke Chemical Company," they said.

I had a dim notion of the name. It seemed to me that this was one of the plants which had boomed during the war and afterwards had con-

tinued, with the idea that German dyes and chemicals would not again compete in the American market. They had quoted us coloring matter and synthetic fruit flavors; but we weren't interested.

The normals walked me upon the broad platform of a freight elevator. I saw by the city license framed on its side that this was operated by electric power. A normal moved a lever and we slowly rose past one dark floor, two, three, four. Upon the fifth, we stepped out. Several lights were burning here and better ones than below, — bright Mazdas, these were. We were in another wide room but this had rows of desks and work benches; big bottles and carboys gleamed from shelves. The glass in the windows reflected the lights like mirrors, for they were black behind, with steel shutters tight screening them. None of this light escaped.

One of the normals jerked the binder from before my mouth and I coughed out the cotton without hindrance. From this floor, no shout could escape; nor could a shot be heard outside.

They watched me but let me alone. I sat on the edge of a desk and looked about at them. Just now, they were doing nothing.

It was plain, of course, that they had com-

plete control of this empty plant. Probably Stamby-Temke had a watchman but the normals either overpowered him, terrorized him or bought him over. Perhaps he was one of them; who had applied for the job for the purpose of obtaining these buildings for their use. Evidently they were quite at home here.

They were so at ease, indeed, that they must be sure that no one would disturb them. I attempted a pose "at ease" but with my hands tied back of me, and more particularly with the feeling I had, I certainly made a poor pretense at it.

Something was going to happen to me here, I knew; and I was going to have nothing to say about it. The occurrence would be of that sort which precedes the finding of a body in a deserted building.

You've read in the papers, as I had, how the vice-president of the John Doe Company, making an inspection of a disused building prior to reopening it, was shocked to come upon the body of a man, evidently dead for some time. His clothing and so on; marks of identification and so on. The police state that the man undoubtedly met a violent end and prior to his death and so on. It is evident that the man was brought

there by several others who used the building for — well, here I was to find out for what these normals used this building.

The elevator, which had descended after depositing us, reappeared with another group of normals and with a girl. Doris! Yes; there she was! If they had tied and gagged her while bringing her here, they had loosed her again; she stepped off the elevator and moved a little away from the normals. Not even her hands were tied; but she was in the same fix I was; that was clear.

They were letting her go to see what she would try to do, as they had let me. I got up from my seat on the desk; she came toward me. "Hello," I said; and she said the same and sat in a chair near me. I slumped down again on the edge of the desk.

There was an average of eight of the normals about us in that big office; some kept sifting in and out, from and to a farther room, where there appeared to be somebody or something particularly important.

Doris glanced that way several times and they watched her; I watched her, too. She appeared alert and on edge with eyes bright and

with lips thin and tight; but she didn't show fright.

I'm not sure what I showed but I know what I felt. I was dull, not alert like her. One sort of nature seems to dull itself when in for what it can't prevent; that was mine. I guessed that the "glass room" was over in that farther end of this floor.

During those three hours alone in that closet, I had spent a good deal of thought on the "glass room"; and, knowing that the scheme at the Sencort Trust had employed gas, naturally I set to fitting gas in the arrangements of the "glass room." So now that I had seen this was a chemical factory, I was sure I was right. They had some ritual with gas for Doris and me. A rather elaborate ritual, if one were to judge by the time it took them to make ready. Or perhaps they were waiting for somebody.

A telephone instrument stood on the desk beside me. The last time I'd sat down, I had placed myself next it. Now I didn't take it up; I merely moved my hand and lifted the receiver from the hook.

One of the normals saw me and made no move. He had no reason for worry; there was no response in the wire; the circuit was dead.

“ Know anything to do? ” I asked Doris in a whisper.

“ Not now,” she replied.

The normals did not care; they did not even come closer to hear what we said.

“ This is the place, I suppose,” I continued. She nodded.

“ What’s your idea for later? ” I asked her.

“ I’ll have it — later,” she said.

So that was it. She had no better plan than I who had none at all.

Just then Jerry came in. That is, I thought at first he was Jerry. My heart leaped at the sight of him; physically it leaped; I felt it pounding in me. I thought he was Jerry, you see. I thought he had come here as Keeban; I believed he was playing the part of Keeban but that really he was Jerry who had come to try to save me.

XXI

DORIS ENTERS THE GLASS ROOM.

YOU see, I had remained sure up to this time that there were two of them. Now and then, for short periods, I had questioned myself about it; but always my certainty of Jerry, as somebody distinct from Keeban, won over my doubt. I would never grant that Jerry, my brother, could be guilty of what Keeban had done.

Then, if they were only one, why would Jerry warn me and send me to prevent the plan of Keeban, as he had sent me to the Sencort Trust?

"Here's Jerry!" I said to myself, and that jump of my heart encouraged me. "He's playing Keeban. He's come for me."

The normals nodded or gazed at him; he gave hardly a glance at them. He looked to Doris and came over to me.

My pulse had stopped jumping then, when I saw him closer. "He's not Jerry!" I warned myself. "He's Keeban!" And then my senses did another roundabout. "He's Keeban and

Jerry, too!" For here was a body which I was sure was Jerry's and some one else possessed it. That some one must be the soul we'd called Keeban — Jerry and I. Here was Keeban who'd robbed Dorothy Crewe and thrown her in the street; here was Keeban who had shot Win Scofield for his insurance and had knocked me on the head when I called at Cheron Street; here was Keeban who had tried to kill, by poison gas, Strathon, Géroud and Teverson and the Sencort directors in their room. And here — in the sense, at least, that I felt him physically present — was Jerry, who had been brother of mine for twenty-five years. And his present purpose was to finish me.

"Well, Steve," he said, "You did a good job."

"All right, I guess," I replied.

"Damn good," he granted to me. "You got any idea of what you beat me out of?"

"No," I said, doing my best to stand up to him; and while I talked to him, I thought, "He warned me. He told me to do it. That wasn't Keeban, of course. Jerry had the body then. Jerry must come into him at times. Then Jerry knows and goes horrified at what Keeban does. Jerry himself sent me that warning to try to stop

him. He did the same in the killing of Win Scofield."

He went on talking, "You beat me out of more than you'd make in the bean business if you lived as many more years as you're going to live minutes. You like that girl over there?"

I didn't reply to that; but he went on as if I had.

"Good you do. She's traveling right along with you. Plenty of space for two in the old glass room. Now Stenewisc, he was simply a fool."

"Stenewisc, who made the gas?" I asked him. I was trying to keep him talking for the general reason that every minute gained was another minute lived; and besides, below everything else in my mind, was the idea that something might turn this body back from Keeban to Jerry again. I got to figuring like this:

"Years ago, when we were at college, he started being Keeban for a couple of short periods which confused him afterwards. He was Jerry nearly all the time. Then he stopped turning into Keeban until that night of the Sparlings' dance. He became Keeban for a time, then he was Jerry again when he came home to talk to me, after which he went back to being

Keeban. He has stayed Keeban most of the time since, especially through that Scofield business; but once or twice he became Jerry. But now, except when he sent those two notes to me, he's been Keeban all the time."

"Stenewisc, he never had any sense," he went on to me. "He had the gas during the war. But would he sell it to the army or to the English or the French or, if he didn't like that side, would he sell to the other? He would not. He wouldn't help any government anywhere; he wouldn't help a government even to wipe out the rest. He was set to do the wiping himself, personally. He had his big idea."

I kept quiet; and he stood close. This was like Jerry himself, this impulse to talk on.

"He figured he could croak everybody—give him a little more time and plenty of gas. Everybody in New York, anyway." Keeban laughed. "Lot of good that would do. Get up!" he told me.

I got up.

"Get up!" he said to Doris; and she arose.

The normals formed before us and behind; and so we started to march to the glass room.

There was an ordinary wood and plaster partition first which set off another large room at

the end of this floor. The usual employment of this place was plain enough, even to me with only college course knowledge of chemical matters. Here were the laboratories for experimentation and research where a commercial firm, such as Stamby-Temke, would keep a covey of chemists testing their products, analyzing the goods of competitors and making experiments to improve their own formulæ for colors, caustics, preservatives, antiseptics, poisons, solvents, reagents and what not.

Most of these tests would be simple enough and involve no danger to any one; but some would generate gases, poisonous or otherwise noxious, which should not be allowed in an open room; therefore the firm had installed, at the end of this laboratory, a special compartment which was, beyond any doubt, "the glass room."

Its outer wall was not of glass; rather, it was not all glass, though there were two windows in it. No blinds were drawn before them but they were black from the steel shutters outside. The other three walls were of glass from floor to ceiling and, as the normals brought us nearer, I could see that the glass was heavy, clear plate such as is used in show windows and that it was carefully and evenly joined in steel framing.

Where the glass met the frame, and about the single, glass door, the joints were caulked and sealed, making the place air-tight and gas-tight, undoubtedly. There was a way of ventilating it without using the windows, I saw; for cords communicated with ceiling traps. The traps were open now; the blackness above was the darkness of the sky. One set of cords hung inside the room, another hung just outside the glass.

I guessed that, when Stamby-Temke had the building, the chemists who worked in the glass room used the inner set when they wished to clear the air of their cabinet; the outer cords must be for emergencies, in case the chemists in the outer laboratory saw the experimenters in the cabinet overcome; then the rescuers could open the ceiling before going into the glass room.

The fact that the traps now were up suggested that the cabinet recently had been used. For whom? I wondered. I was sure of the purpose of the cabinet. Here was the place of punishment and of discipline.

Keeban strode into the glass room and pulled the cords. The ceiling closed and he came out. His normals stood about him, grinning. They took on an additional detachment of manner

which I didn't like at all; it was detachment from us — from Doris and me — that I mean.

She was keeping her nerve and she was standing steady. She was gazing into the glass room with a look which made me think that, though she'd known about this cabinet, she had never actually seen it before.

I haven't mentioned its furnishings. The room had a bench with nothing on it; there was a table in the middle of the cabinet. Nothing was on that either, but from its position, and from the way that Doris and the normals looked at that, it had a much more menacing suggestion.

It was a narrow table, no wider than a couch; it was about the length of a couch. And somehow, though it was perfectly flat and hard, it suggested a couch. At least, I imagined myself spread out upon it. The reason I fancied this was simple. I was sure that they meant to put me into that cabinet; and the only place they could put me and tie me safely would be to bind me to that table.

Then they would pump in Stenewisc's gas — his KX, which so competently had accounted for Costrelman and his butler and for the four guinea pigs which, but for me, might have been Lord Strathon and M. Géroud and Sencort and

Teverson. But for Doris and me, I mean; for I knew — and Keeban and his normals knew — that if I had failed to warn Teverson, Doris was there to do it. Consequently, we were to get the gas now; and we were not to get it simply, but impressively as a part of a ceremony of punishment and discipline.

For Doris had done the double cross; she had “speiled” and “spouted”; and not only had she spoiled the biggest job this crowd ever had “on” but by her squeal or her willingness to squeal had made every man here a candidate for the electric chair. That was their judgment and their sentence against her.

It was not a fair judgment, nor a fair sentence, even from their own point of view, I thought. It was strange that, standing there and staring into the glass room, I angered at this more than anything else, that their sentence of her wasn't fair. She never could have agreed to mix in murder; she had mixed with them only for counterfeiting, for her shoving of “the queer”; and through that contact, she had learned of the plot to kill which she could not stand for.

Other flashes of comprehension came to me there, too. Keeban was fast developing, I understood. He'd started, so far as I knew, only

with robbery; then he'd run to shooting of old Win Scofield and, from that, to his attempt at the simultaneous gassing of the group appointed to gather in the Sencort directors' room. Keeban had tried to carry Doris with him from counterfeiting into killing; he had failed. He must have been carrying some, or most, of these normals with him from smaller offenses into those which threatened "the chair."

He could not simply have happened upon a group of normals going the exact gait he was going; he had to speed up some of them and keep them with him and impress them with the certainty of something worse than "the chair", if any failed him. So he was giving "the glass room" to Doris and me, not merely for our punishment, but for an example to the others. And more of the others were arriving now. I heard footsteps and voices, a girl's voice among them and her laugh. I turned about. Shirley, Win Scofield's widow, had come with two young men beside her.

The sight of her brought me images of recollection. How I had seen her sing in her house that night before the shooting! How, like a cabaret Récamier, she had received me after her husband was dead! How I witnessed her dance

at the Flamingo Feather that night she had stabbed at her partner, Keeban!

Sometimes, since, I had doubted the authenticity of my own witnessing that night; I wondered if, actually, she had tried, in that sudden, swift dart of the dagger, to kill Keeban, her partner. Now I wondered that no longer.

She came in smiling; but her smile was too like Doris's when she now smiled at me. For a moment I thought that Shirley was with us; she, also, was to be a guest of the glass room. Then I realized that this was not so. She had come only to see us entertained within the glass. I realized that it was for her we had been waiting. She had come but not of her own will. She had been brought to see this entertainment which was planned for her.

I got a glimpse of Keeban's face; and there I saw a leer which seemed to say:

"You stabbed at me. I let you get away with it. But watch your step. Now see what I can do."

She kept on smiling. She looked at Doris but didn't speak. She didn't even nod at Doris, indeed; and Doris took no heed of her. She gazed at me, did Shirley Scofield, — Christina. And she smiled at me as she had at Keeban, and she

smiled at the normals, too. That smile meant nothing; no more than their grins in reply to her.

Keeban spoke aloud. "Everybody's here." It seemed to be a prearranged signal. Two of the normals came up to me and took my arms; two more placed themselves in position similarly to escort Doris.

"What's the big rush, boys?" said Keeban then. "Didn't they show us something new down on Wall Street? Don't we show it back to them?"

He laughed; and how he looked like Jerry when he laughed! But he didn't sound like Jerry. Not at all. That other person possessed the body.

"Where are they?" he asked the nearest of his normals.

"Oh!" said the normal, remembering. "In there."

"Get them," said Keeban.

The fellow stepped to a locker at the side of the room; he stooped, and, reaching in, he brought out a pair of white rabbits in one hand, another pair hung by their ears from his other fist.

"Rabbits," said Keeban, with a sort of play at apology to Doris and me. "I know you got

guinea pigs; but rabbits do just as well and they show better."

He took them from the man who held them and he stepped again into the glass room and tossed the four white rabbits upon the table. Carefully he closed the door when he came out.

He went to the end of the cabinet where now I noticed, when he touched it, a thin pipe with a cock right against the glass. He twisted the cock and he returned to us.

The end of the pipe pierced the glass, I saw; but now that the cock was turned, nothing visible came from it. Stenewisc's gas was colorless and odorless, I remembered. I did not expect to smell it through the glass of the cabinet; but I could not help expecting the rabbits, on the table there, to show some alarm. They discerned nothing threatening, however.

Timidly they tried this end of the table and now that. They hopped about, nosing each other, naturally enough. Nothing at all seemed to be happening. Then a lethargy crept over them. They did not sleep; they remained awake but became slower and slower in their motions. Yet nothing alarmed them; they seemed to sense nothing at all but the difficulty of motion. They nosed up, seeming to search

for this intangible thing which was restraining them. They drooped, as though pressed down; but they remained awake and gave not a squeal nor a quiver of pain.

Surely it was painless, as well as invisible and intangible, too, — this amazing death from Stenewisc's gas.

"No trouble at all, you see," said Keeban to me. "You never know it."

He knew how horrible that gradual, invisible death was; a shot or a knife, or anything sudden, would have been ten times more merciful. It's a strange thing to say, but I'm sure that pain — some pain, at least — would have made it less terrible. It was uncanny, you see.

"They'd never have suspected it," he spoke again to me. "They'd each thought the rest were getting thick in the head and nobody would've tried to get up from the table — till they couldn't."

He was speaking of the four, who would have been in the Sencort directors' room, if I hadn't interfered; and his words, and this sight of the rabbits before me, made me see how the Englishman and the Frenchman and Teverson and Sencort would have gone, without feeling, with-

out knowing, with nothing really to alarm them till too late.

“Great stuff,” said Keeban again and not to me but to the normals. “We’ll make it worth millions yet — millions! We’ll get the next bunch and then sell Wall Street the gas — at our own price! Boys, the curtain raiser’s over.”

For the rabbits had drooped into death. There was not a mark nor a twist on them to show it. Keeban shut off the gas, where he had turned it on; he pulled the cords to open the ceiling.

“Perfectly safe in two minutes,” he assured Doris and me. “It’s light; the stuff rises.”

Doris and I looked at each other. What had been done had been planned of course to break our nerve. I can’t say what cracks showed in mine, nor how much satisfaction I was giving them. I can say that what she was supplying them was mighty small.

We had two minutes, one of us or both of us; and she wasn’t for wasting them. Nor was I thinking of things far away. I couldn’t; and I didn’t want to.

I felt my flashes of home; of my mother and my father. I felt flashes of Jerry, as he used to be when he was my brother. To see him here

beside me now stopped these old sensations. My mind brought to me the night he'd come and told me how "Keeban" must have taken away Dorothy Crewe; it brought me to the police station where, that same night, he broke away; it brought me to the Flamingo Feather where I danced with Doris, calling her Cleopatra. It brought me to Caldon's, where I happened on her "shoving the queer"; it took me to the Blackstone and the train and to that supper with her again. It took me to that closet where I'd kissed her, as I had never kissed any girl before.

Here we were, caught together, with Keeban going once more into the glass room. He went himself and picked up the rabbits and flung them at our feet on the floor.

"How about it now?" he said to me. "What's the order? The lady first?"

I swore at him. He had my nerve, you see. I swore and strained at the cords on my hands. A lot of good it did me. He laughed.

"All right, Steve!" said Doris to me. "All right!" Quickly but calmly she said it. Calmly is not the word. It doesn't do at all. No word would. "All right, Steve!"

"All right, Doris!" I said in reply. Of

course nothing was right, except one thing; and that was whatever held her to me.

“Margaret’s my name,” she told me; and she touched me. They let her; they weren’t holding her just then.

“Margaret,” I said. “Thanks. I like that name.”

Keeban nodded to his normals; and they took, and tied her. Then he, himself, carried her in.

They tied her to the table, much as I had seen they would. They came out and closed the door. He twisted that cock on the pipe; I saw his wrist go around and around.

I stood and stared and waited. There was just one thing that I might try; and it was not yet time for that.

Doris — Margaret — lay on her back, each wrist and each ankle looped to a leg of the table. She lay looking up at the closed ceiling, not moving except for the rise and fall of her bosom with breathing. She had tried her cords and found the uselessness of struggle; so she lay and waited.

I watched her and waited for my moment. I would have known it was not much to wait for, if I had thought it out. But you don’t think out affairs like that; when there is only one thing to

do, you have to take a chance on whatever it is. So I stood, with Keeban beside me and Christina a few feet away and the eleven normals beyond us and between and I watched the girl on the table breathing.

They watched her, too. Christina, Shirley Scofield, — with what sort of feelings? And the normals about us, what were they thinking, too? I didn't even try to wonder about Jerry who had become Keeban and who was doing this thing.

My hands, tied together, grasped the top of the back of a chair against which I leaned; and my muscles went tight to raise it and, spinning, to swing it upon him and kill him. Yet I knew I would not do that; I might knock him down; that was all. It would not help my girl at all.

She half turned her head toward me and then, quickly, she faced to the ceiling again. She wanted to look at me, I thought; and then she had thought it must seem like an appeal to me, which I could not bear when I could not help her.

I held on to the back of that chair and waited, watching her bosom rise and fall. I kept saying to myself something that Teverson told me. When Costrelman and his butler had been killed

by the gas, others in the room had been affected but had recovered. An under-dose was not deadly, therefore; that is, if this were the same gas.

I could see nothing; smell nothing; sense nothing going on in that cabinet; but neither had I when the rabbits had died.

My plan depended entirely upon time. There must be gas in the cabinet, but not too much gas, — not enough to kill my girl in there.

She breathed more slowly, I thought; I stared and seemed sure of it. At the same time, Keeban began looking at me. He suspected I was about to act; and I did it. I lifted that heavy chair behind me and, spinning, I swung it against the glass side of the cabinet and smashed it through. I followed it myself and was inside, smashing, kicking, demolishing glass. A girl screamed.

Keeban started after me; I felt — or I had felt — his hand grabbing me; but now his clutch was gone. He was away from that break in the glass. I heard him call and cough, “Beat it! Duck! Don’t suck it in!” Shirley, for it was Shirley, screamed again.

I thought, “He knows. A little kills. I’ve got it. Cleopatra, Doris, Margaret; she’s got it,

too." But I had her and I hardly cared. The rest of them had got away.

My smash of the glass, with Keeban's yell — and more than that, his example — had given the start. Now shots were speeding them along. I didn't know who was shooting; they were out of the laboratories; and still they were going away.

I had that ceiling over the glass room open; I did that before I cut my cords. Now, by sawing against the glass, I freed my wrists and I had off Doris's cords.

The fight outside — still I did not know who was fighting — had passed from that wide room where the elevator was; it went farther or it went down.

I got out of the glass room and around to that cock in the pipe which Keeban had turned.

The valve was turned tight; no doubt about it; for I twisted it half a turn open and twisted it back again to make sure. "He didn't give you the gas!" I called to Doris. "It wasn't turned on!"

Then he came back into the room, bloody and leaping; and he was Jerry! The change, which I'd given up hoping for, had come over him.

"Steve!" he called to me. "Steve! Come

down and see him. I've got him. Christina croaked him cold! And I've got him! Come down and see him!"

"Who?" I said; for I was shaky; and in my mind, then, there was only one of them.

"Keeban!" he told me. "He's cold, downstairs where Christina croaked him."

XXII

A CROAKING AND FINIS.

DORIS was up and she was steady. "You didn't get the gas," Jerry was telling her.

She said nothing to him. It was harder for her than for me to understand what he had done; yet she got it before I did.

"You're Jerry Fanneal," she said to him.

"That's me."

He went to a window and threw up the sash and flung back the shutter. He fired three shots in the air.

"You were here — not Harry Vine — just now."

"He's been cold for half an hour. That's what delayed you."

"What?"

"Christina stopped to croak him, Harry Vine, Keeban. She wouldn't take a chance."

He was wiping blood from his shoulder where he'd been hurt. I was bloody in several spots and Margaret was wiping that off me.

"Come along," said Jerry: and he took us downstairs. And there he lay — himself in duplicate — dead on the floor. He had been stabbed through the throat.

I bent over him and, with Jerry himself bending beside me, still I got a shock at seeing him. "Two of you," I said over and over. "Two of you." I was still shaken, you see.

"Two of us!" said Jerry, and he touched that body so identical with his own. "The difference between us was this: when he was turned loose, he walked the wrong way across the Lincoln Park grass."

"Two of you!" I said and straightened, my arm on Jerry's shoulder. "See here! When we were boys, with our beds side by side, what was the book you kept underneath to read in the mornings?"

"The Wonder Clock," he told me.

"And the story you liked best of all?"

"'One Good Turn Deserves Another.'"

"Jerry!" I cried to him; and I stood there holding to him, staring down at Keeban.

"I didn't kill him," Jerry said to me. "I came here to get him; I meant to bag him. Christina came with him but she worked with me. She knew I was here. She meant to kill

him. I didn't know that till after I'd stepped out and went at him. She gave him the steel; she wanted to croak him. She thought he'd get her, if she didn't."

Doris said: "He would have. Where's she now?"

"Gone," said Jerry; and Doris asked no more.

Jerry ceased to stare down at Keeban. "We were twins, I suppose; that must be it; and he walked the wrong way across Lincoln Park. That was all there was to it." His mind kept going back to that. "Steve," he said to me.

"What?" I asked; I thought again he was turned to philosophy; but he said,

"Upstairs, you swung your chair hard, old top. I thought you'd never do it."

"I see now," I replied. "You were waiting for me to do that."

He nodded. "You had to make the move; then I could do the rest. You got to it just in time, old fellow!"

"In time?" I said stupidly. "The pipe wasn't turned on."

"Yet you were just in time; in a minute more, they'd got wise that it wasn't."

We heard men downstairs now. "Who's that?" I said.

"Must be the bulls; his gang," Jerry glanced at Keeban again, "got out; all that will ever get. Well, come on, bulls; a lot you can hurt me now!"

He looked up from his brother and straightened; and I felt for him perhaps one thousandth of his relief from what had been on him since that night he came into my room, after the Sparlings' dance, and said Keeban had come and gone with Dorothy Crewe.

I put my hand on him while we waited, Doris and he and I, for the approaching steps of the bulls.

"You can go back to anybody now; you can go back to Dorothy Crewe."

"I'll not go back," he told me.

"You wouldn't," I said.

"Are you going back, Steve?"

"Where?" I asked.

"To the bean business and — your Dorothy Crewe?"

"I don't know about going back to the bean business," I said. "And I never had any Dorothy Crewe; but if I had I wouldn't go back to her. No; I know that!"

The bulls came on 'us. We were in the light, but they flashed their own lanterns in our faces. "Up with 'em!" They had our hands over our heads at the points of their pistols. And when they saw Jerry, they felt sure of a haul.

"Here's *him!*" they called to those behind. "Here's him who's wanted from Chi to the Street! Here's him!"

"Take a look at the floor," Jerry advised them. "And when you take me along, have him with us."

"How's this, Mr. Fanneal? How's this?" And then I reaped one advantage of my previous notoriety. They knew me; and there, with Jerry beside me and Keeban on the floor, I tried to tell them.

Of course, they took us to the station for the second telling, which was not the last by any means. They held Jerry that night; but they did not hold Margaret and me. Of her, they knew nothing; and what I knew of her, I did not tell them.

If I told them all the truth about her, one section of this truth ought to make up for the other; her trying to warn Teverson, and taking the risk she ran, surely was full compensation for her passing "the queer." I felt that; but

not being certain that others would so judge, I kept to myself what I knew. And I kept her to myself, too.

I had her in a cab; and this was no stray taxi, you may be sure. This was certain to go where I ordered it; and the number I gave was that of my friend on the Avenue.

"We can both go there and stay," I said. "That's one use for friends."

"No," said Doris. "Not for me."

"Oh, yes," I said; and, being alone with her in the back of that taxi, I firmly and forcibly held her. Also I kissed her, several times.

"Don't!" She fought with me; and furiously, too.

"I love you," I repeated to her. "And you love me. God knows why, but you kissed me in that closet; and you ——"

She told me then and there that none of that counted. She had thought we were going to be killed, you see, or she never would have shown any interest in me. Now we weren't killed, she said; and certainly that was true. We'd have to go back to our own lines, me to the bean business and she to "shoving the queer."

"You can't do that," I told her.

"Why not?" she came back at me.

"You've no more of the queer to shove. Your father's taken."

"And you're glad of that!" she accused me.

"I'm not glad!" I denied. "I'd do anything to free him."

"You wouldn't shove the queer with me!" she retorted.

"Didn't I do it — just about?"

"But you didn't want to. You didn't like it!"

"I never liked anything so much as that trip on the train, except when I had you later."

"Well, that's over now!" she said.

"I guess not. You and I have just started!"

"We've not . . ."

That's how we argued in that cab. I was wild about her; she did love me; and after a while I made her remember it. Naturally we had quite a time; we'd just been under rather a strain together.

I took her to my friend's that night; and the second day I took her to the Church Around the Corner and married her. I waited till the second day so Jerry could be best man.

Jerry has not yet gone back to the bean business; I think he never will return. One of many results of his finding Keeban is that Jerry found

his mother — an old woman who, when she was young, had twin boys one of whom wandered away; and for twenty-five years she has known only the one who turned to crime. Now she knows Jerry; he knows her. Naturally he's bewildered a bit about his future.

I am back in the bean business; that's where I belong. I'm at my desk. I've returned.

But I've returned rather like the soldier Kipling sings about who returned to Hackensack "but not the same." And I'm not the same for a similar reason.

" Things 'ave transpired which made me learn,
The size and meanin' of the game."

I've thought about that a lot, these days. My parents picked up Jerry and adopted him to "broaden" me and immediately set about the business of making him as much like ourselves as possible. They succeeded to the point where we both would have gone through life bean merchants, and happy at it, but for Keeban.

He's the one that did things to us.

But for him, the game would have been my club and golf course, the Drive, the Drake, the other items I've mentioned.

I'd have married, I suppose, some girl with my exact previous notions of the game.

Now, as I've mentioned, I'm married to Doris. And I have, I know, the best wife in the world. Certainly the most interesting.

Some of the family friends, who know the facts, feel there is something fundamentally wrong with my wife.

There is not; and there never was anything wrong — except counterfeiting.

She doesn't admit that was wrong. She concedes that now that she's married to me there is no actual occasion for anyone in the family engraving a steel plate but she makes this concession in a way which suggests that, should occasion ever arise, she will not be without recourse as a breadwinner.

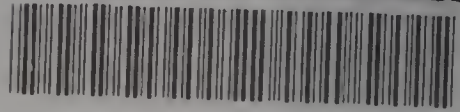
The interesting part, for me, is I don't know how much she means it. So I'm playing that bean business safe to keep the occasions down below and quite out of her reach.

If one ever blows the lid off, I'll tell you.

THE END

MAY 16 1927

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00012738602